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XAI HOLDINGS
SOCIAL MEDIA AND AI FUSION
IN TALKS WITH INVESTORS TO RAISE $20 BILLION

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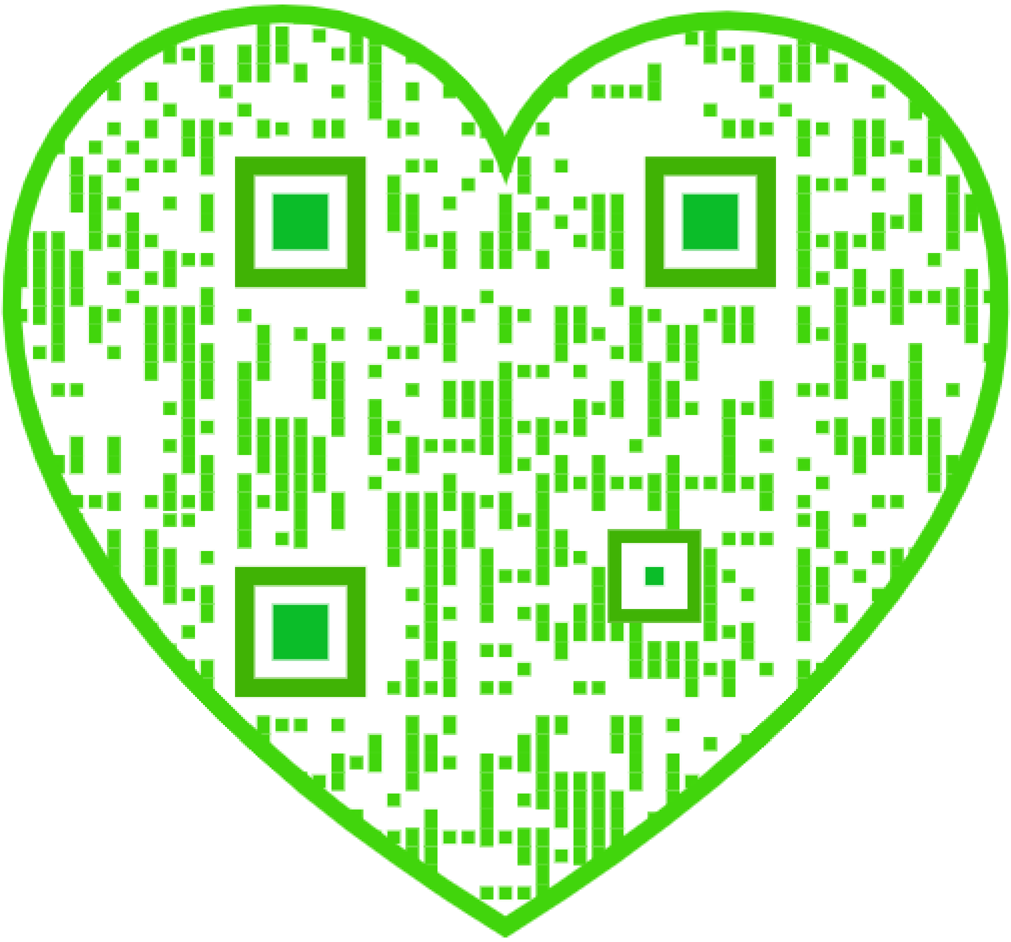
QWEN 3 AI MODEL
UPDATE UNVEILED TO COMPETE IN THE CHINESE TECH RACE

Social Search
THE NEW HABITS RESHAPING THE FUTURE OF THE INTERNET



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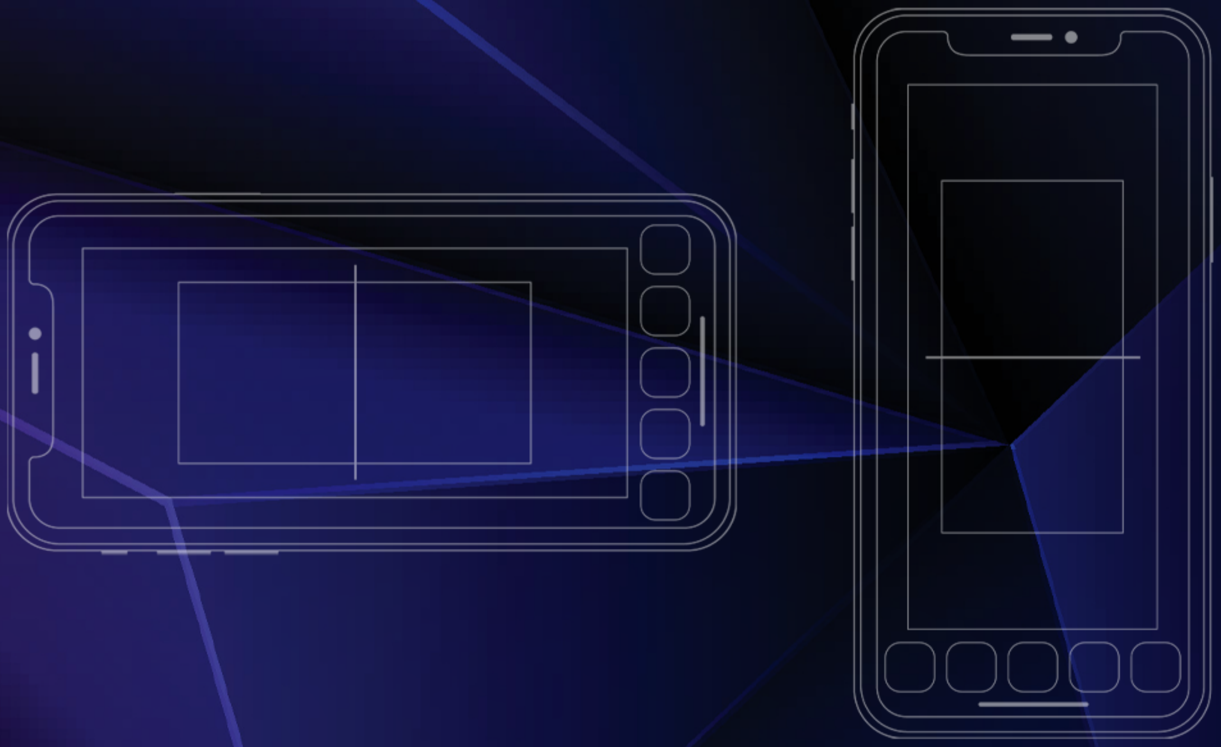

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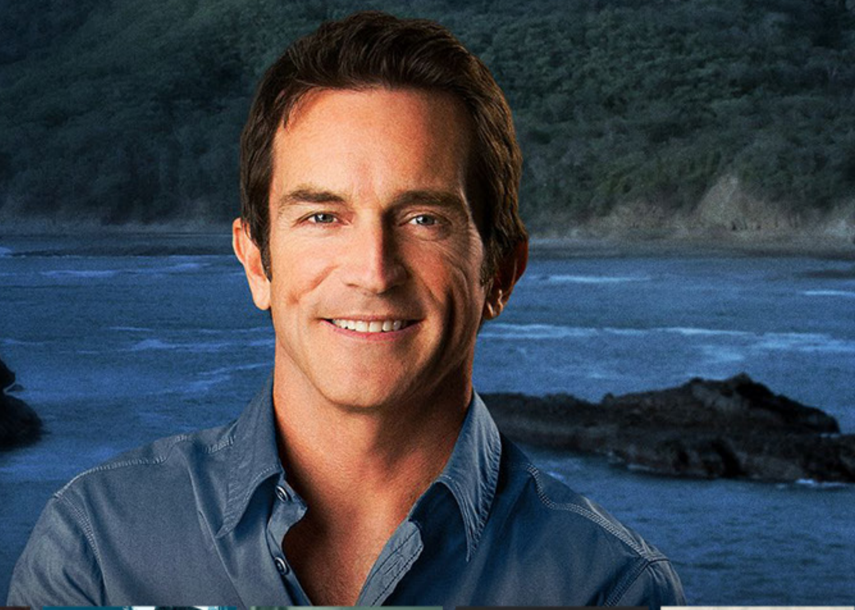

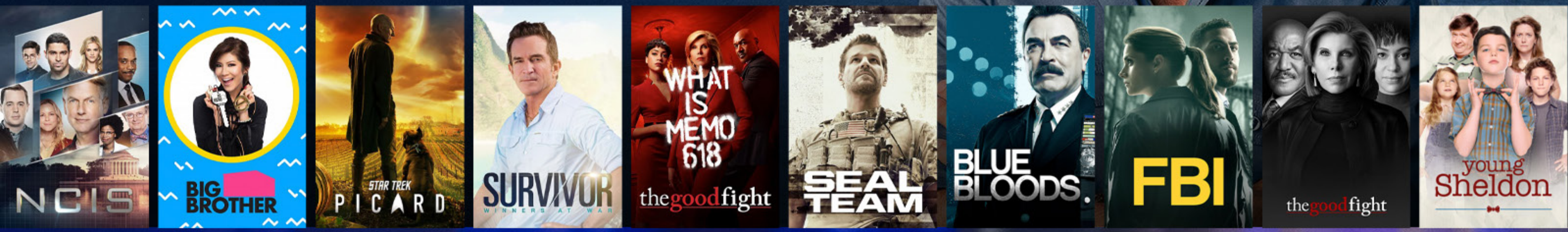
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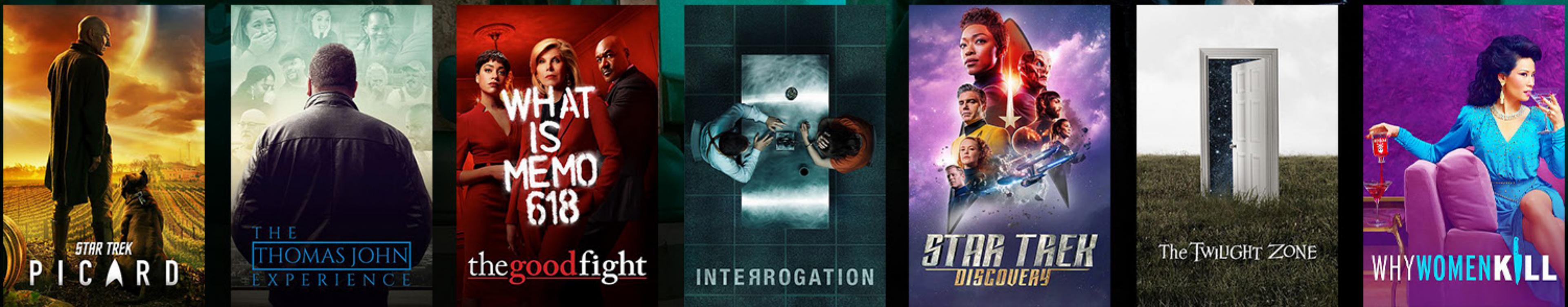
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XAI HOLDINGS PURSUES $20 BILLION TO REDEFINE AI AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Elon Musk's XAI Holdings, a bold fusion of his artificial intelligence venture xAI and social media platform X, is negotiating to raise $20 billion in a funding round that could value the company at over $120 billion, according to a report published this week. This monumental effort, poised to rank among the largest startup capital raises ever, aims to propel xAI's cutting-edge AI and enhance X's global influence, positioning XAI Holdings as a transformative force in the digital economy. For investors, technology visionaries, and millions of platform users, these talks underscore Musk's audacious plan to merge AI innovation with social media engagement, potentially revolutionizing how people connect and access information online.

Formed through xAI's acquisition of X in March 2025, XAI Holdings seeks to harness xAI's advanced AI, exemplified by its Grok chatbot, with X's vast user base to create a dynamic, AI-driven ecosystem. The funds could alleviate X's financial burdens from its 2022 Twitter buyout, accelerate Grok's development to rival industry leaders like OpenAI, and expand X's infrastructure to compete with platforms like Meta. Amid U.S. tariffs, supply chain disruptions, and intensifying regulatory scrutiny of AI, Musk's track record with SpaceX inspires confidence, but the talks' early stage and economic volatility introduce risks. As XAI Holdings pursues this historic raise, its success could reshape the convergence of AI and social media, challenging established giants in a rapidly evolving industry.

The merger of xAI and X marks a strategic pivot for Musk, consolidating two ventures with complementary strengths. xAI, founded in 2023 to advance human scientific discovery, has developed Grok, a chatbot designed to deliver precise, context-aware responses, positioning it as a competitor to Anthropic's Claude. X, rebranded from Twitter, retains a significant user base, serving as a hub for real-time global discourse despite financial challenges from its $44 billion acquisition. The all-stock deal, announced in March 2025, created a conglomerate with a combined valuation exceeding $100 billion, reflecting optimism about the potential to integrate AI insights with social media scale.

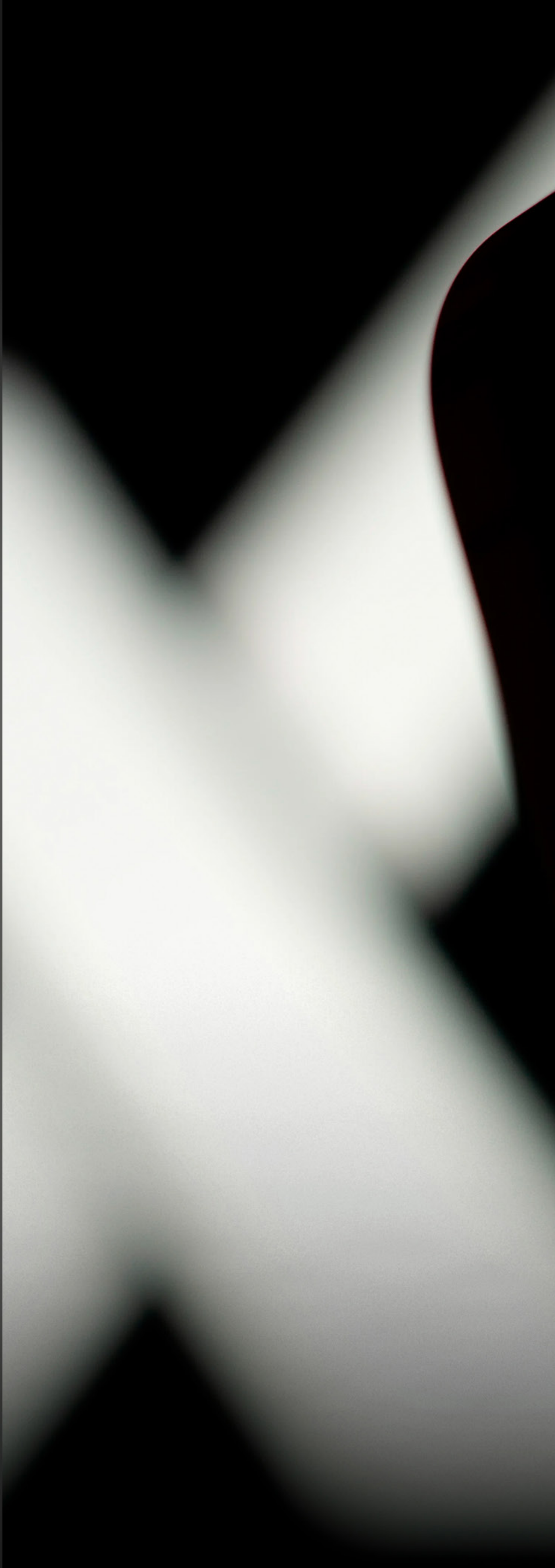


Image: Jaap Arriens

The $20 billion raise is driven by X's need to manage substantial debt-servicing costs, a legacy of the 2022 buyout that included $25 billion of Musk's funds and $7 billion from investors like Larry Ellison. The funding could refinance these obligations, enabling X to invest in user growth and ad revenue recovery, while supporting xAI's compute-intensive AI projects, such as its Colossus supercomputer cluster in Memphis, Tennessee. The talks involve prominent investors, including Antonio Gracias of Valor Equity Partners, with potential participation from international funds, building on xAI's prior success in securing capital.

A NEW ERA OF AI AND SOCIAL MEDIA SYNERGY

The fundraising effort is poised to unlock a new era of synergy between artificial intelligence and social media, leveraging xAI's Grok to enhance X's platform. Grok, designed to answer complex queries with real-time data, could transform X's content feeds, offering users personalized, AI-curated experiences that rival traditional social media algorithms. This integration aims to boost user retention, as X seeks to recover from advertiser pullbacks that followed Musk's 2022 acquisition, which saw ad revenue stabilize by early 2025.

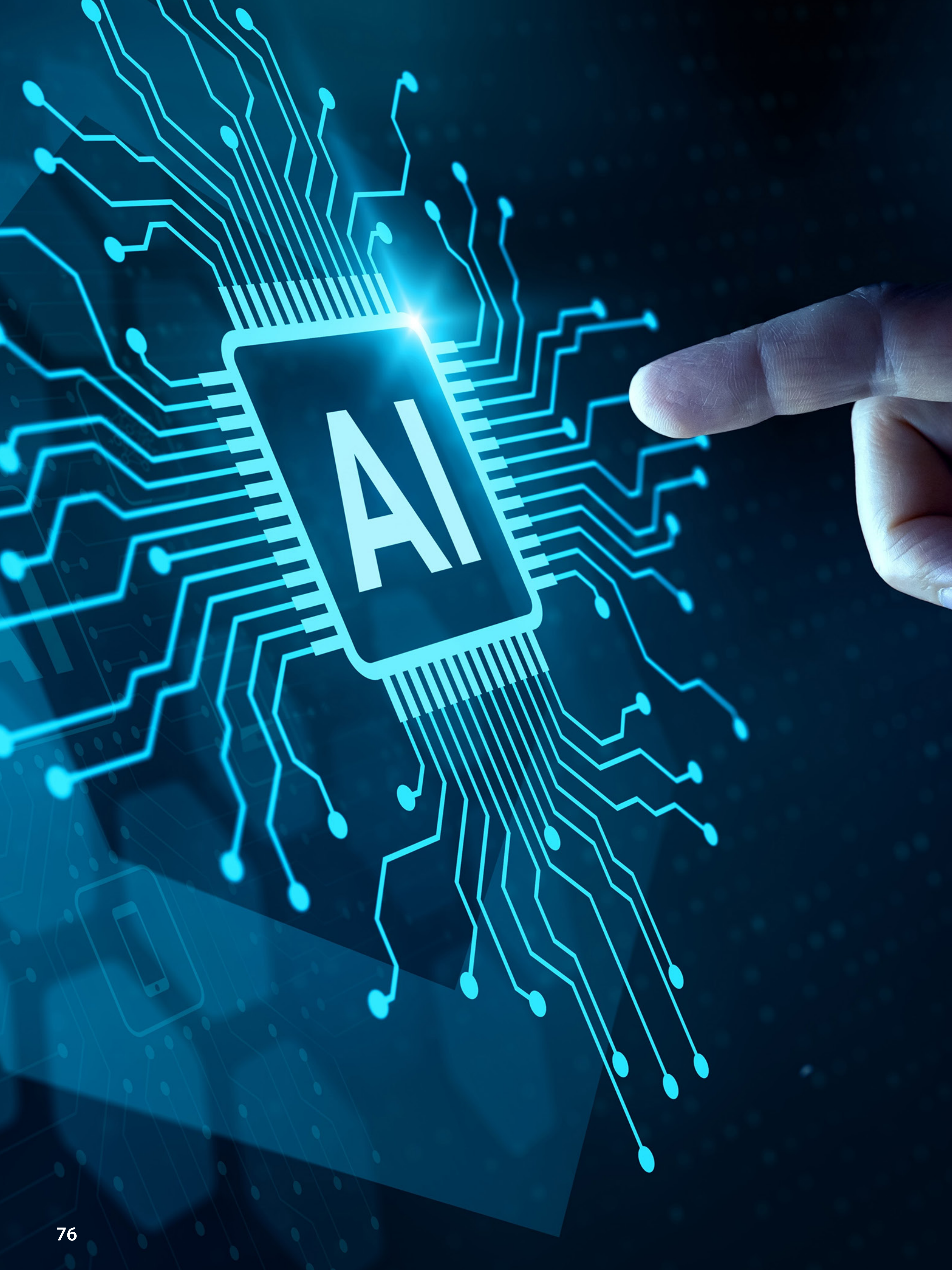
Image: Dado Ruvic

Musk's ambition to create a unified AI-social media platform faces challenges, including the need to balance innovation with user privacy, a growing concern amid global data protection laws.

The success of this synergy depends on delivering tangible improvements that retain X's user base while attracting new audiences, setting XAI Holdings apart in a crowded digital market.

FINANCIAL STRATEGY TO ADDRESS DEBT AND GROWTH

The acquisition, financed with $44 billion, left X with substantial debt, requiring costly servicing that has limited its ability to invest in growth. The funding could refinance these obligations, reducing financial strain and enabling X to enhance its advertising infrastructure, which has seen a recovery in advertiser engagement since late 2024.

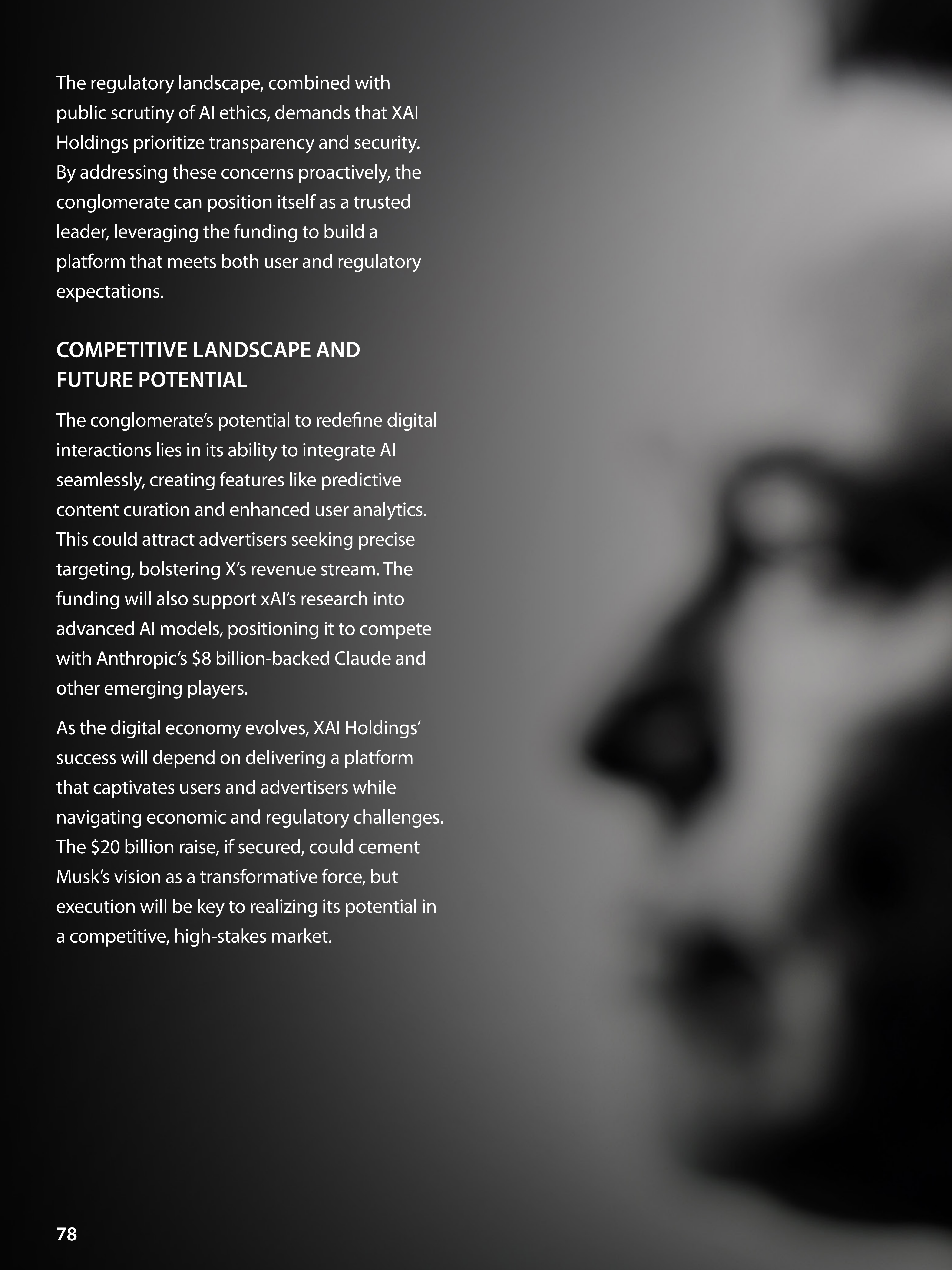

AI

For xAI, the capital will fuel its AI research, supporting projects like the Colossus supercomputer, which trains Grok to process complex queries efficiently. The high cost of AI development, driven by the need for advanced GPUs and data center capacity, necessitates significant investment, and the $20 billion could ensure xAI remains competitive with rivals investing billions in model training. The financial strategy balances debt management with growth, aiming to stabilize XAI Holdings' operations while advancing its technological goals.

The talks' structure, potentially involving convertible notes or equity, will be crucial to attracting investors wary of X's debt and the high-risk nature of AI development. Musk's ability to secure funding, as demonstrated in prior rounds, will be pivotal, but the conglomerate must demonstrate clear progress to justify the ambitious valuation.

REGULATORY SCRUTINY SHAPES AI STRATEGY

Musk's political influence, through his advisory role in Trump's administration, may ease U.S. regulatory hurdles, but international compliance remains complex. The DOJ's Google antitrust ruling, promoting open digital markets, could benefit X's platform by fostering competition, but XAI Holdings must navigate these regulations to maintain user trust. The company's ability to align its AI and social media strategies with global standards will be critical to securing the $20 billion and sustaining growth.



The regulatory landscape, combined with public scrutiny of AI ethics, demands that XAI Holdings prioritize transparency and security. By addressing these concerns proactively, the conglomerate can position itself as a trusted leader, leveraging the funding to build a platform that meets both user and regulatory expectations.

COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE AND FUTURE POTENTIAL

The conglomerate's potential to redefine digital interactions lies in its ability to integrate AI seamlessly, creating features like predictive content curation and enhanced user analytics. This could attract advertisers seeking precise targeting, bolstering X's revenue stream. The funding will also support xAI's research into advanced AI models, positioning it to compete with Anthropic's $8 billion-backed Claude and other emerging players.

As the digital economy evolves, XAI Holdings' success will depend on delivering a platform that captivates users and advertisers while navigating economic and regulatory challenges. The $20 billion raise, if secured, could cement Musk's vision as a transformative force, but execution will be key to realizing its potential in a competitive, high-stakes market.

Image: Jaap Arriens

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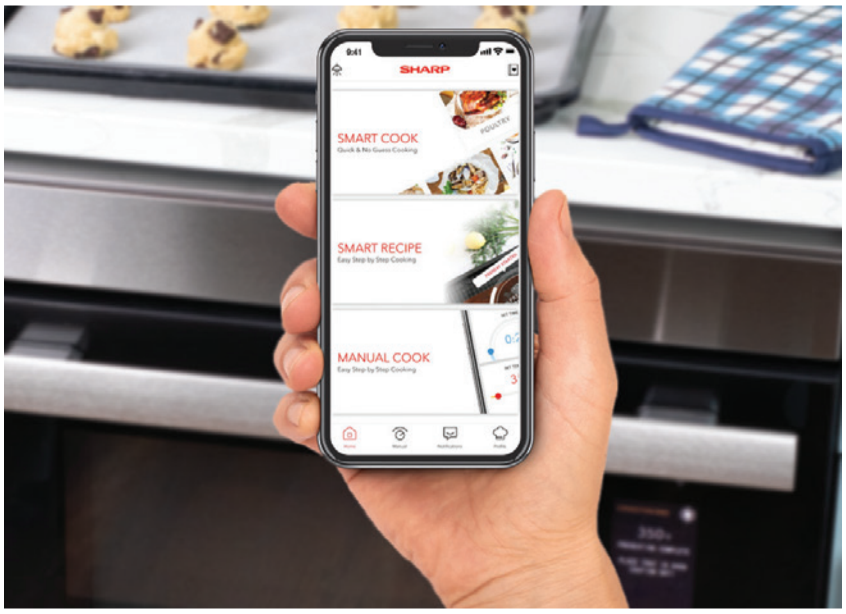

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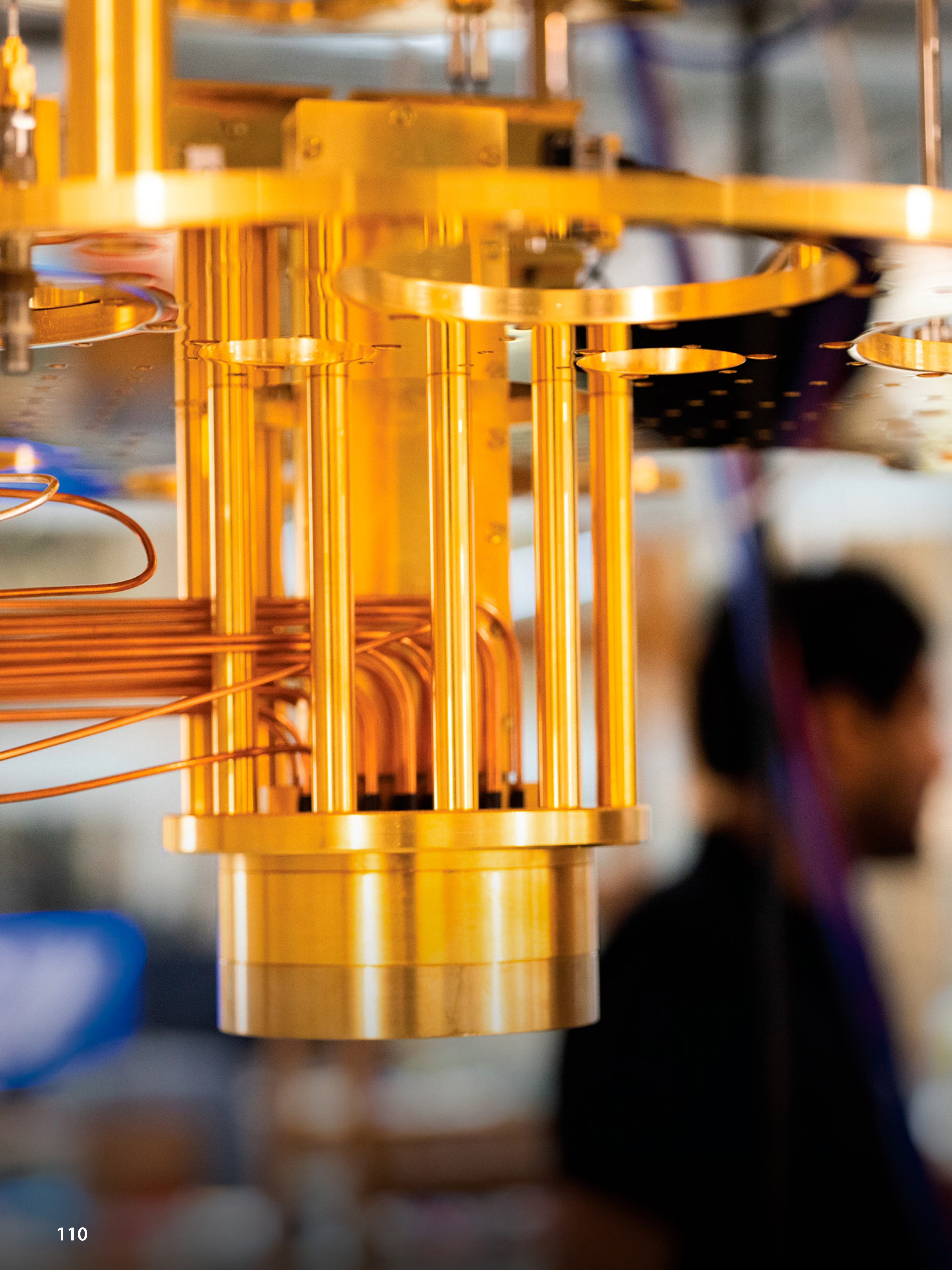


MICROSOFT URGES U.S. TO KEEP PACE WITH CHINA IN QUANTUM COMPUTING RACE

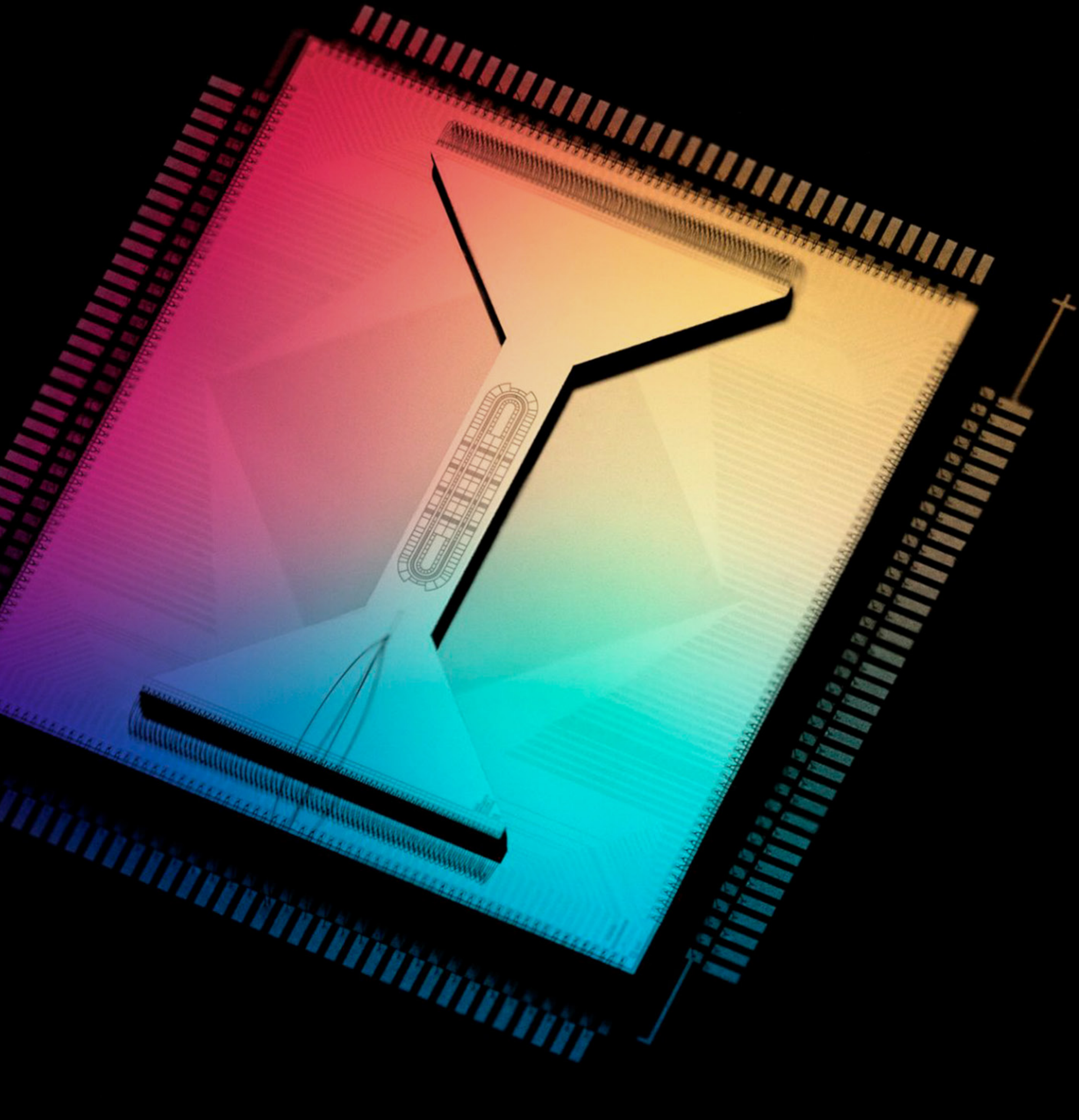
Microsoft President Brad Smith issued an urgent call this week, warning that the United States risks losing its edge to China in the race to develop quantum computers, a technology poised to reshape industries from cybersecurity to pharmaceuticals. Speaking to CNBC, Smith stressed that lagging behind could undermine U.S. economic competitiveness and national security, urging increased federal funding, workforce development, and supply chain fortification. For policymakers, technology leaders, and global investors, this plea highlights the critical stakes of quantum computing, a field driving innovation in the digital economy.

Quantum computers, harnessing qubits that operate in multiple states simultaneously, offer computational power far beyond classical systems, capable of solving problems like molecular modeling or encryption cracking in minutes rather than millennia. The U.S. has long led quantum research, but China's substantial investments and recent breakthroughs signal a narrowing gap.

Microsoft's Majorana 1 chip, launched in February 2025, advances error-resistant quantum systems, yet doubts from physicists and China's progress, such as the 72-qubit Origin Wukong, underscore the need for action.

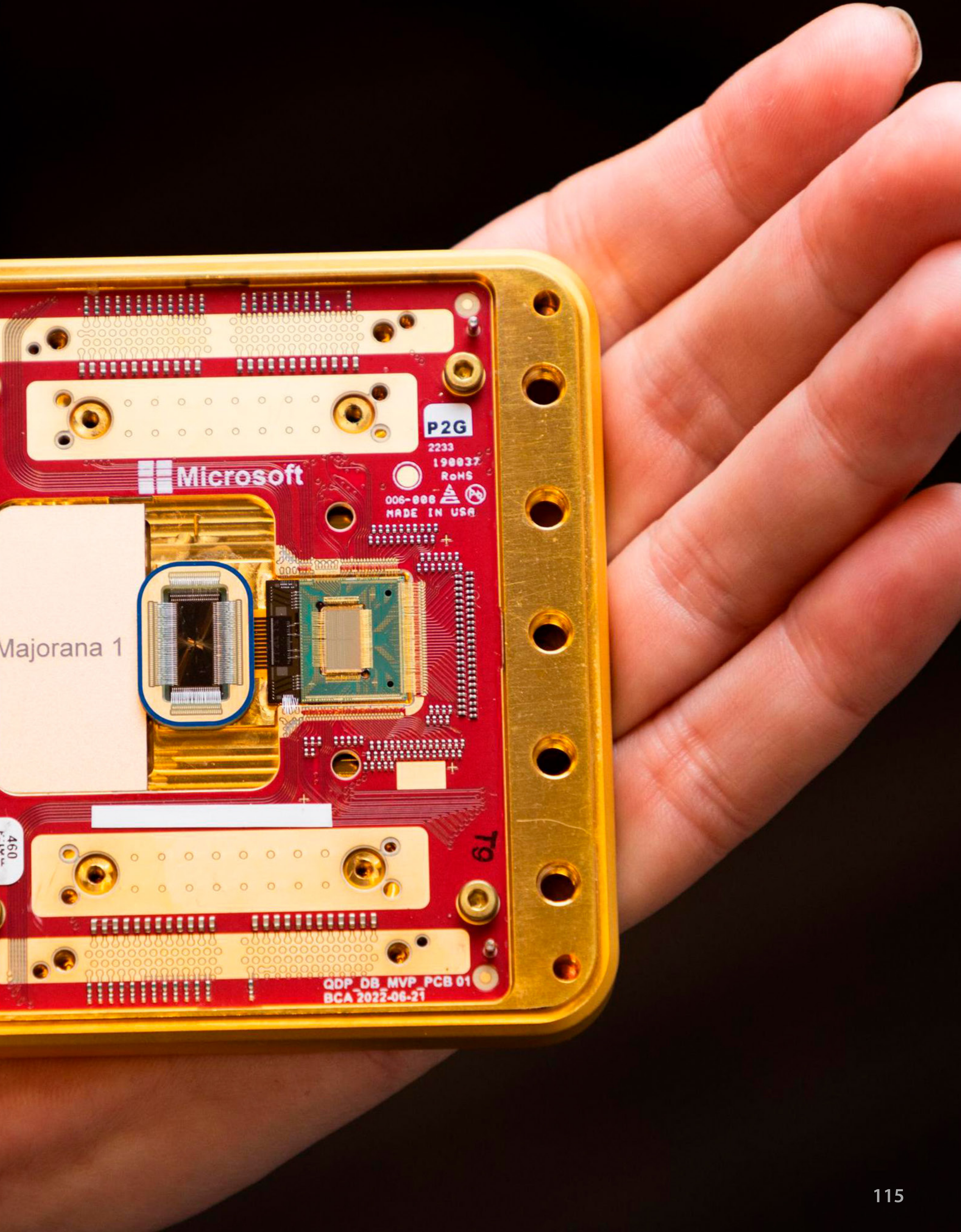
QUANTUM COMPUTING'S VAST POTENTIAL AND RISKS

Quantum computers leverage qubits, which exploit superposition and entanglement to perform calculations at speeds unattainable by classical supercomputers. This capability could revolutionize drug discovery by simulating molecular interactions, optimize global logistics networks, or break current encryption standards, impacting everything from finance to national defense. The technology's promise has made it a strategic priority, with nations racing to achieve quantum advantage—solving practical problems beyond classical computing's reach.



The U.S. has driven quantum innovation since the field's inception, with the 2018 National Quantum Initiative Act allocating $1.2 billion over five years to advance research. Microsoft, a key player, has invested heavily in its quantum program, unveiling the Majorana 1 chip in February 2025, which uses topological qubits to reduce errors, a major barrier to scalability. The chip aims to enable industrial applications within years, potentially transforming sectors like materials science by optimizing alloys or battery chemistries.

However, China's aggressive push, with significant public funding, poses a formidable challenge. The University of Science and Technology of China's Origin Wukong, a 72-qubit superconducting quantum computer, demonstrated advanced AI model training in April 2025, marking a global first. Smith's warning reflects concerns that China's centralized investment could outpace the U.S.'s public-private model, risking a loss of technological supremacy critical for economic and security interests.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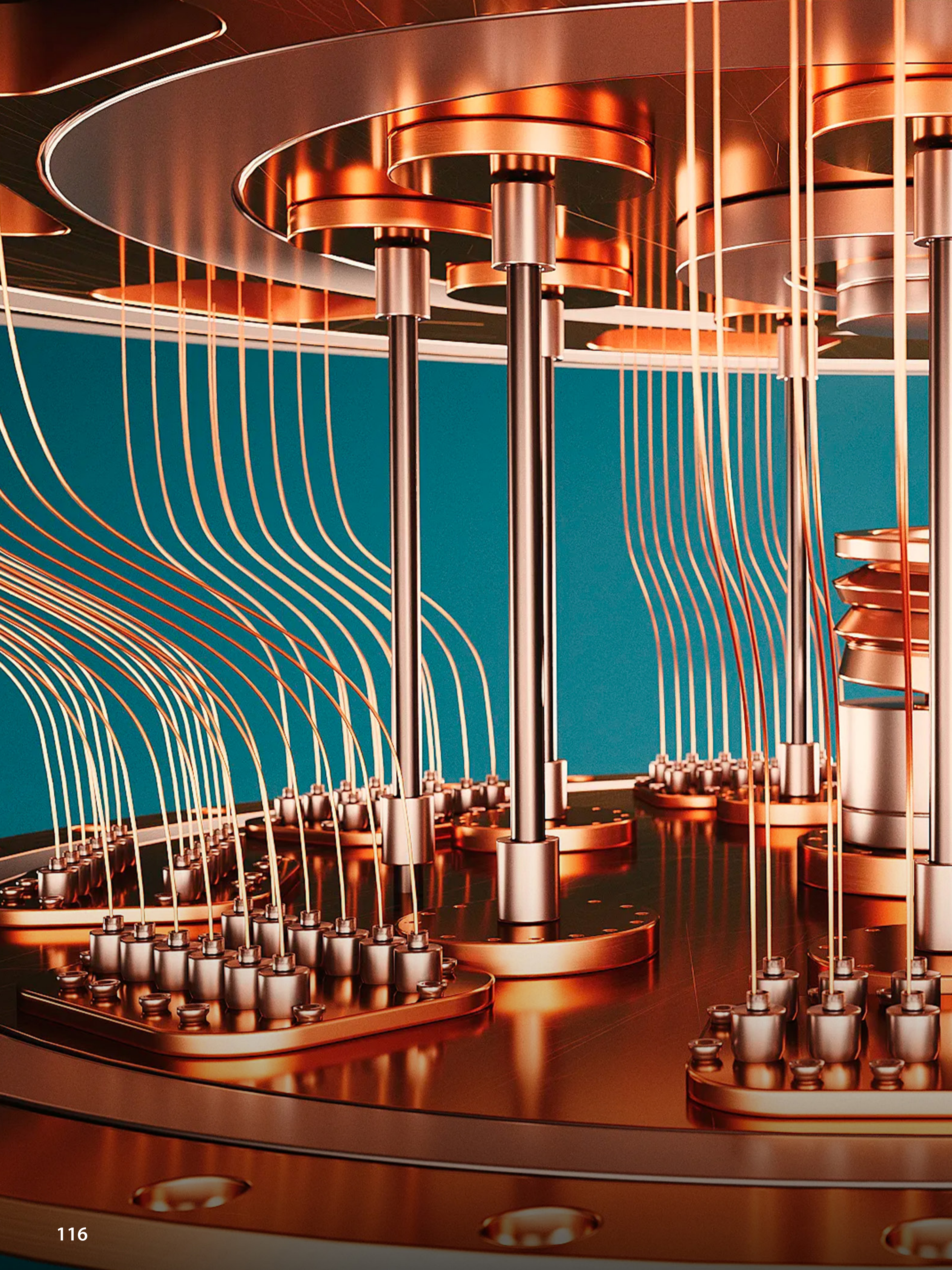
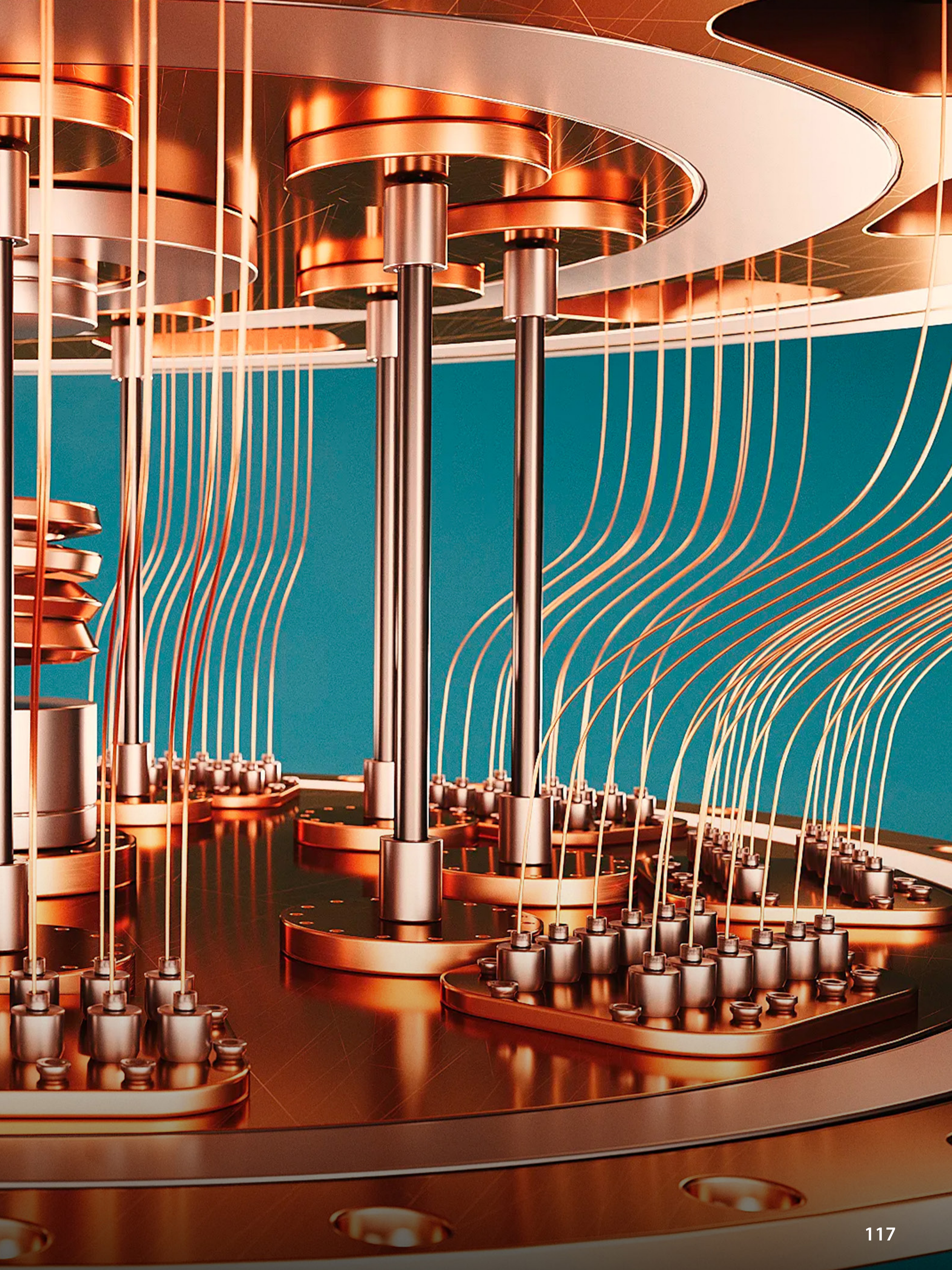




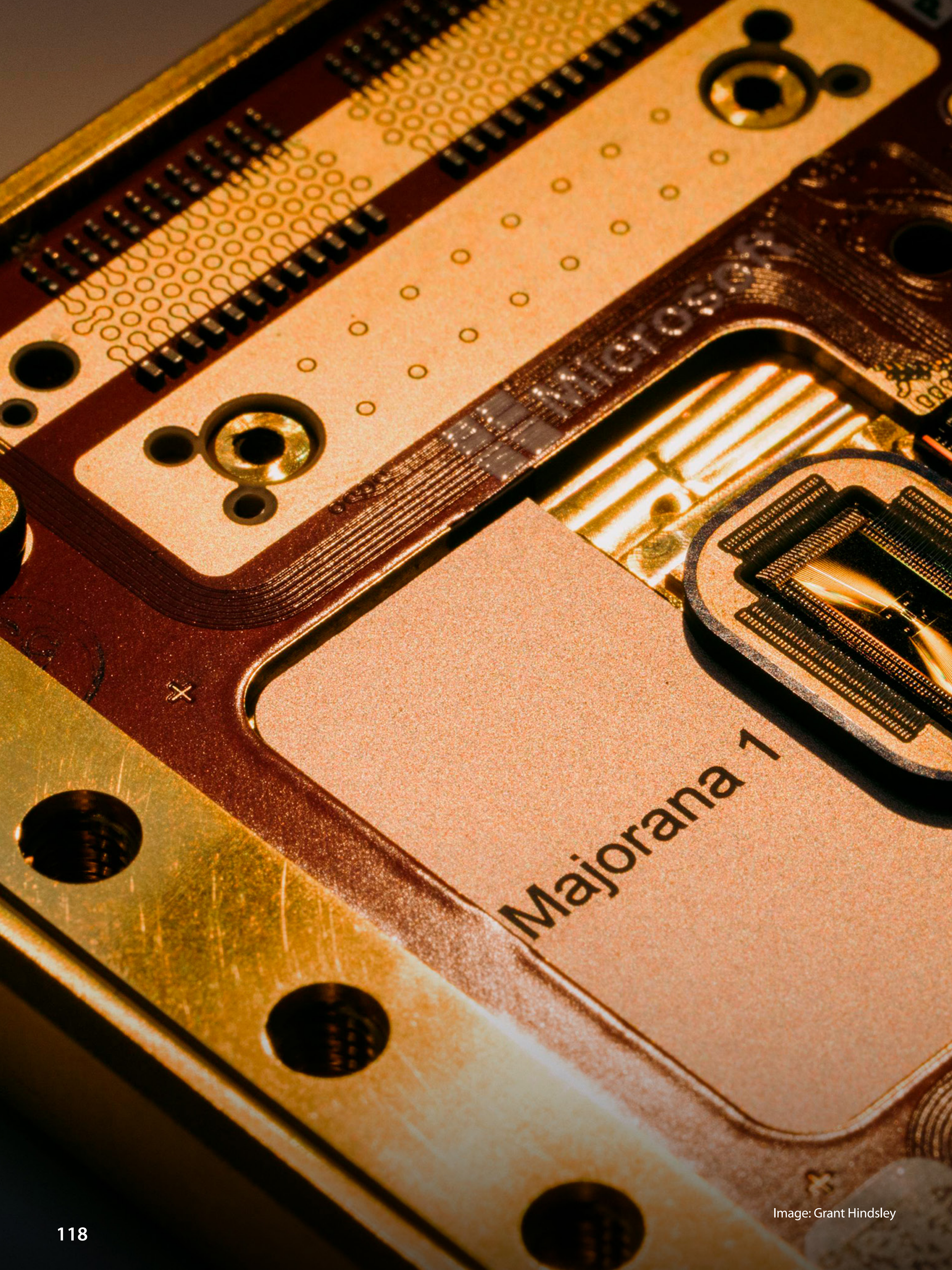
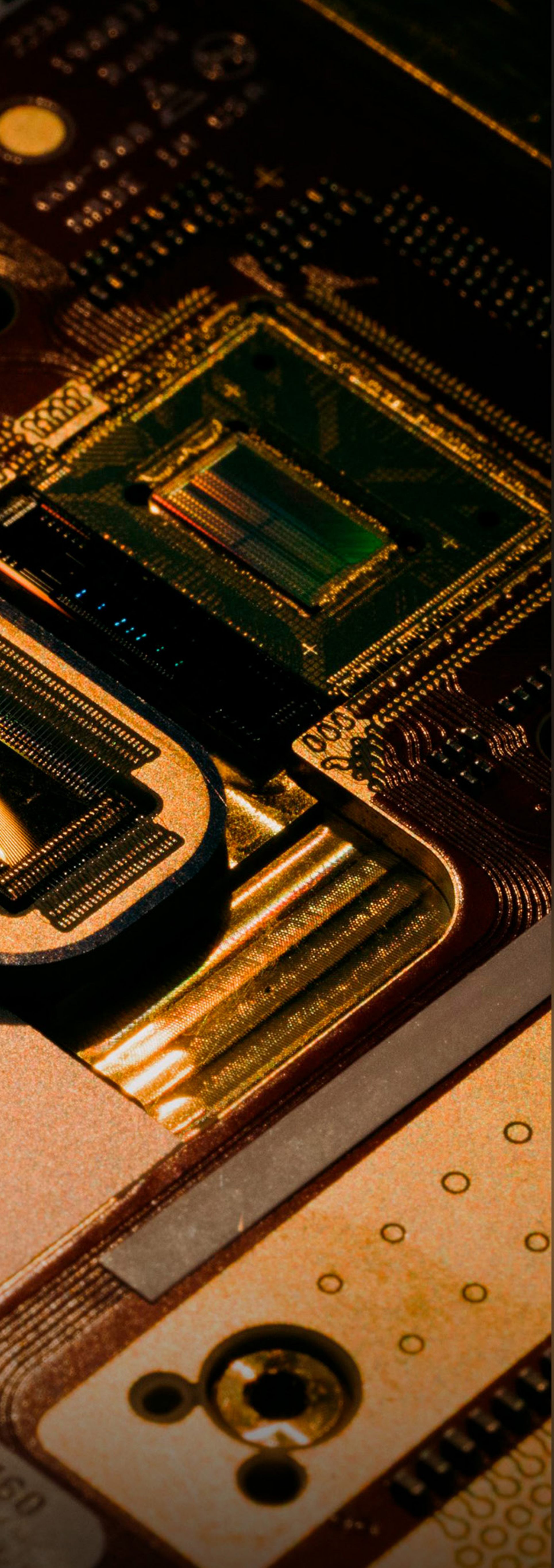

Microsoft
Majorana 1

Image: Grant Hindsley

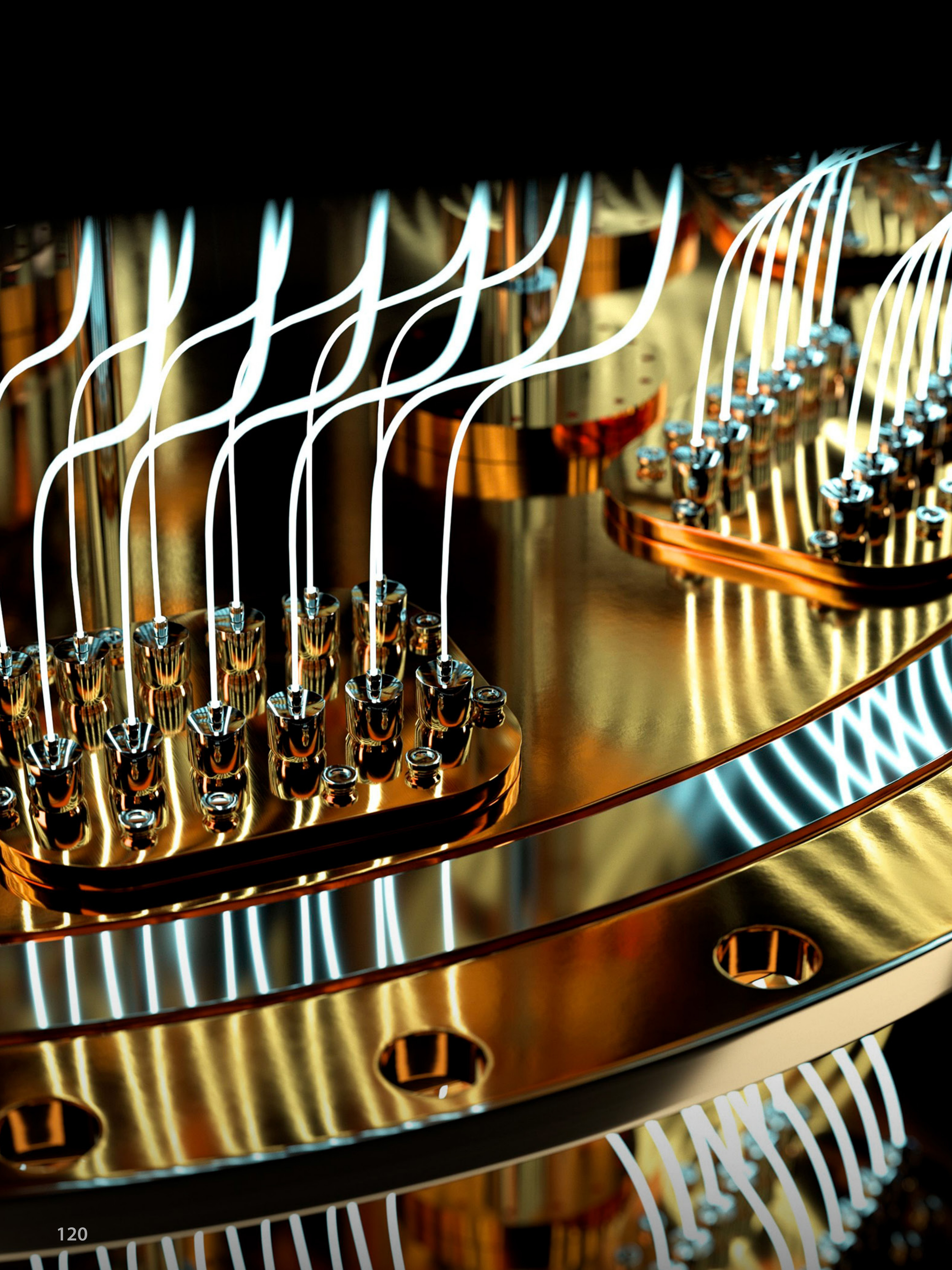


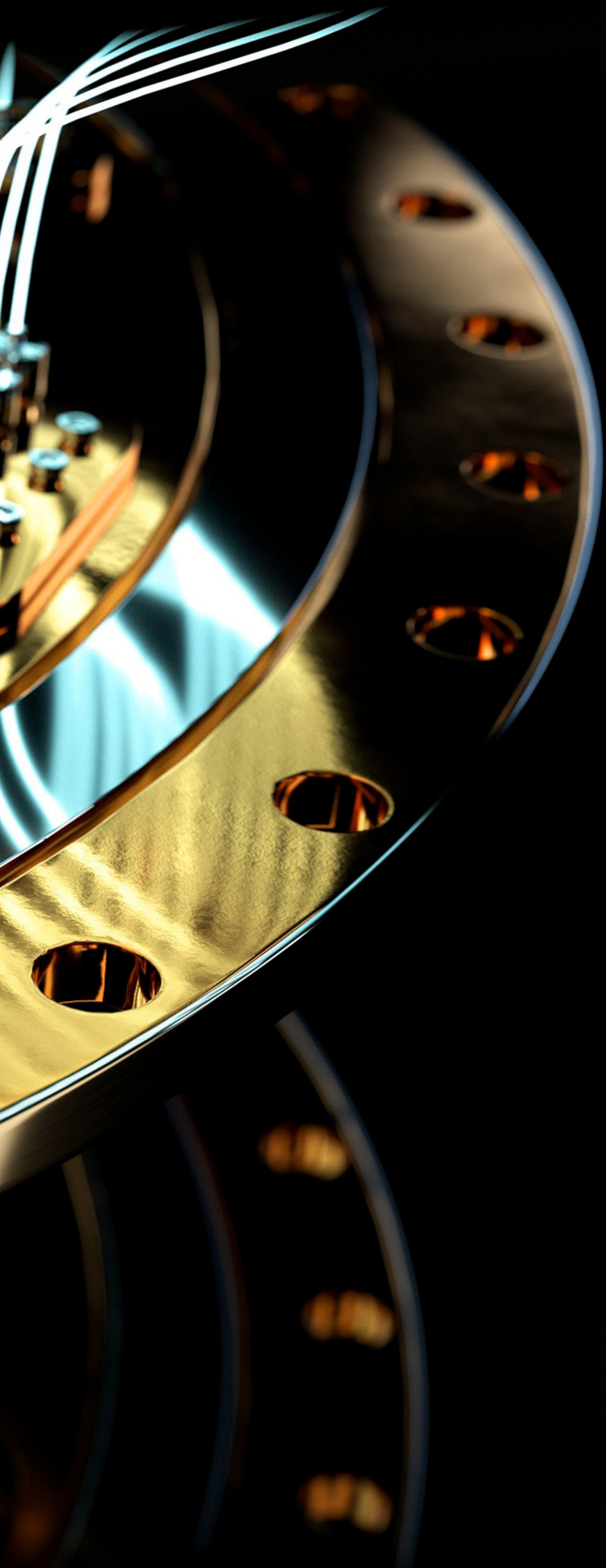
MICROSOFT'S QUANTUM ADVANCES FACE SCRUTINY

Microsoft's Majorana 1 chip represents a significant claim, using topological qubits to achieve greater stability than traditional qubits, which are prone to errors from environmental noise. The company's approach, backed by a robust research budget, targets scalable quantum systems that could power applications like secure communications or complex simulations. At the American Physical Society's March 2025 meeting, Microsoft presented data on qubit manipulation, aiming to validate its technology.

Physicists, however, expressed skepticism, noting that Microsoft's measurements lacked conclusive evidence of Majorana quasiparticles, the theoretical basis for its qubits. Critics, including University of Pittsburgh's Sergey Frolov, argued the data appeared inconsistent, while a 2021 Nature retraction of a related Microsoft study fueled doubts. Microsoft's team, led by vice president Zulfi Alam, countered that ongoing tests would clarify the chip's potential, but the debate highlights the field's technical challenges, where error correction remains a hurdle.

Despite this, Microsoft's efforts align with U.S. industry progress, as companies like Google advance error-corrected qubits and startups like IonQ expand commercial offerings. The U.S.'s collaborative ecosystem, supported by universities and DARPA, drives innovation, but the gap with China's state-backed research demands a stronger national response to maintain momentum.



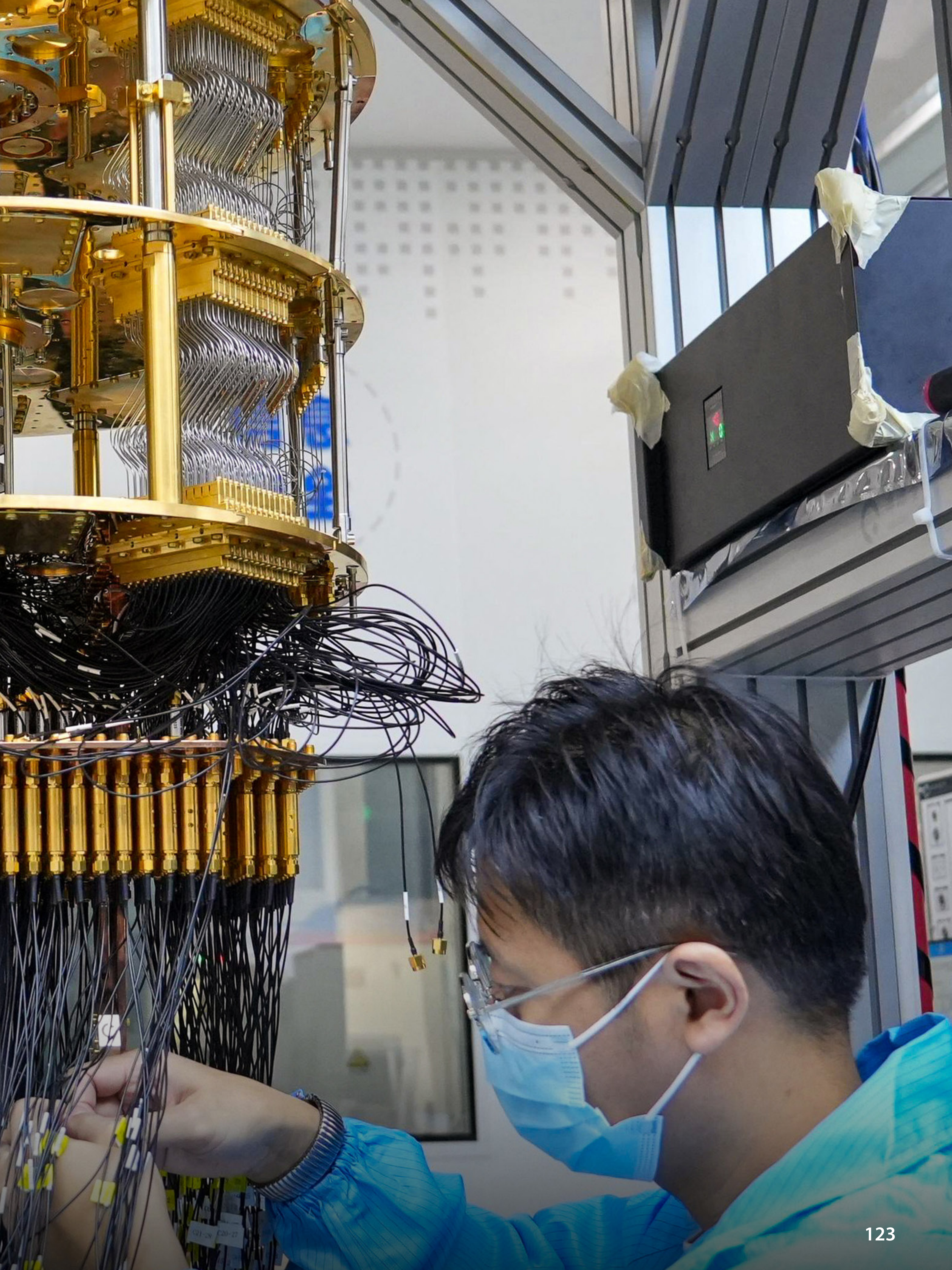


CHINA'S QUANTUM LEAP FORWARD

China's quantum program, integrated into its Science and Technology Innovation 2030 plan, has surged since 2016, with significant funding fueling breakthroughs. The Origin Wukong computer fine-tuned a billion-parameter AI model achieving an 8.4% performance improvement while reducing parameters by 76%.

China's quantum communication efforts further demonstrate its ambitions. A March 2025 experiment transmitted quantum-encrypted images 12,900 kilometers from Hefei to South Africa via microsatellite, setting a global distance record. This laser-based system, far cheaper than prior setups, supports secure global networks, offering strategic advantages in cybersecurity. With plans for a 504-qubit cloud-accessible chip, China is scaling quantum infrastructure, challenging U.S. leadership in both research and application.

The U.S.'s decentralized approach, while innovative, struggles to match China's centralized funding and focus. Smith's call for increased investment aims to close this gap, ensuring the U.S. leverages its research strengths to counter China's rapid advancements and maintain a competitive edge.

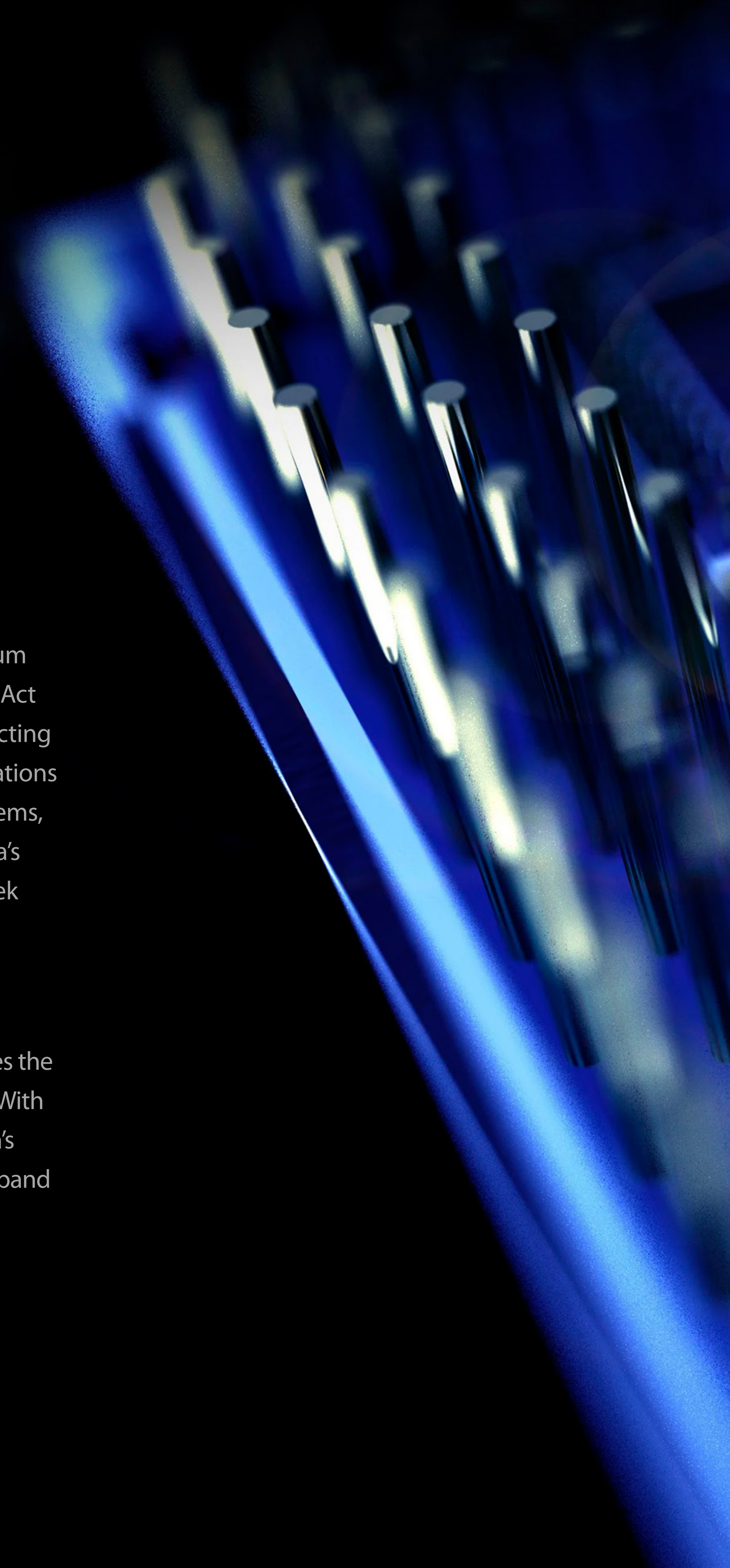


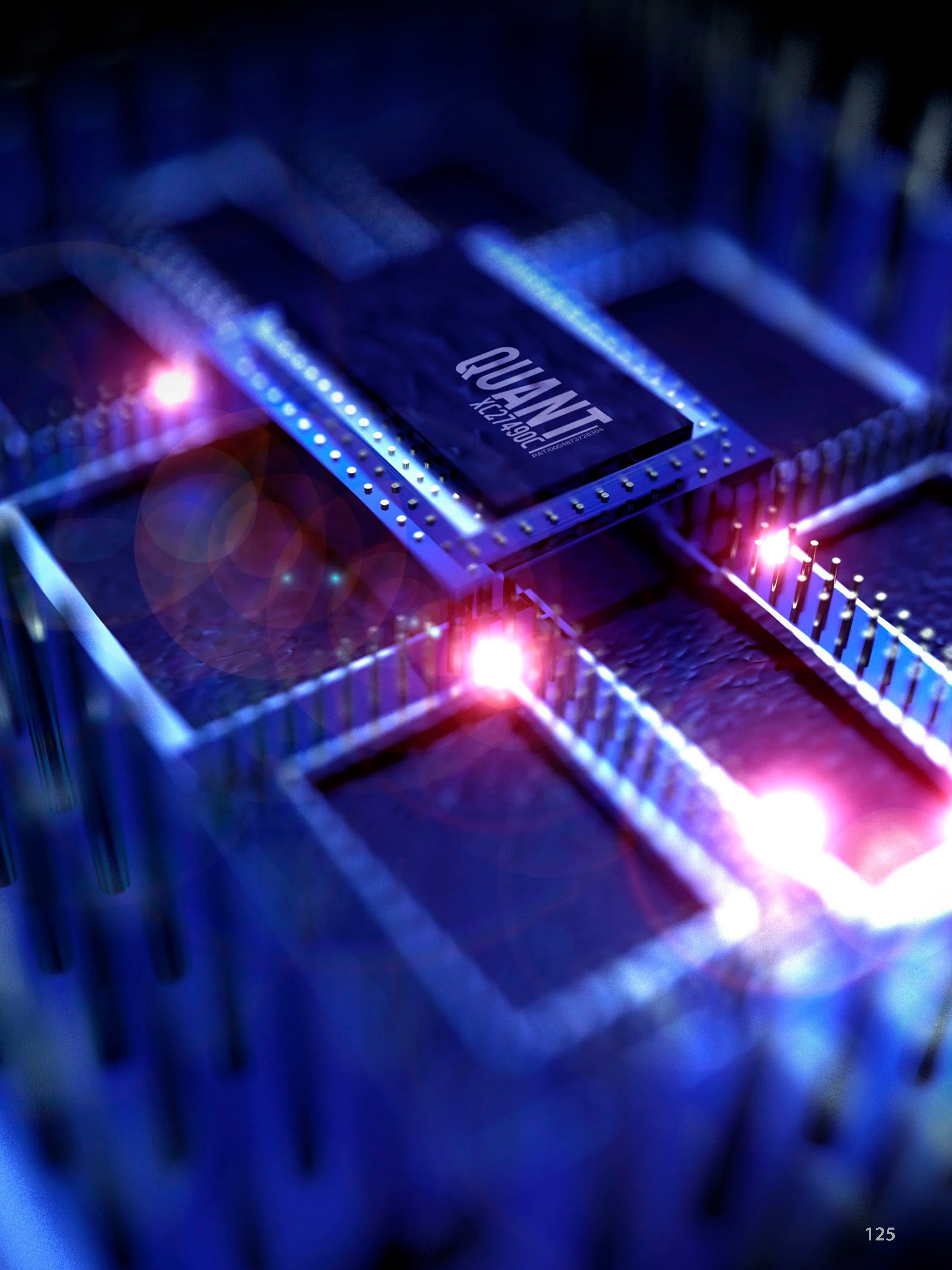
REGULATORY AND TALENT IMPERATIVES

Global regulatory scrutiny of AI and quantum technologies poses challenges. The EU's AI Act mandates safety protocols, potentially affecting quantum data processing, while U.S. regulations on AI safety could extend to quantum systems, requiring robust cybersecurity. South Korea's recent data privacy action against DeepSeek underscores global concerns, emphasizing the need for secure quantum platforms to prevent breaches.

Smith's call for talent development addresses the U.S.'s need for a skilled quantum workforce. With 7,000 researchers active, compared to China's state-supported programs, the U.S. must expand STEM education and attract global talent.

The National Quantum Initiative, set for reauthorization, could increase funding to support this, fostering collaboration across academia and industry to maintain research momentum.

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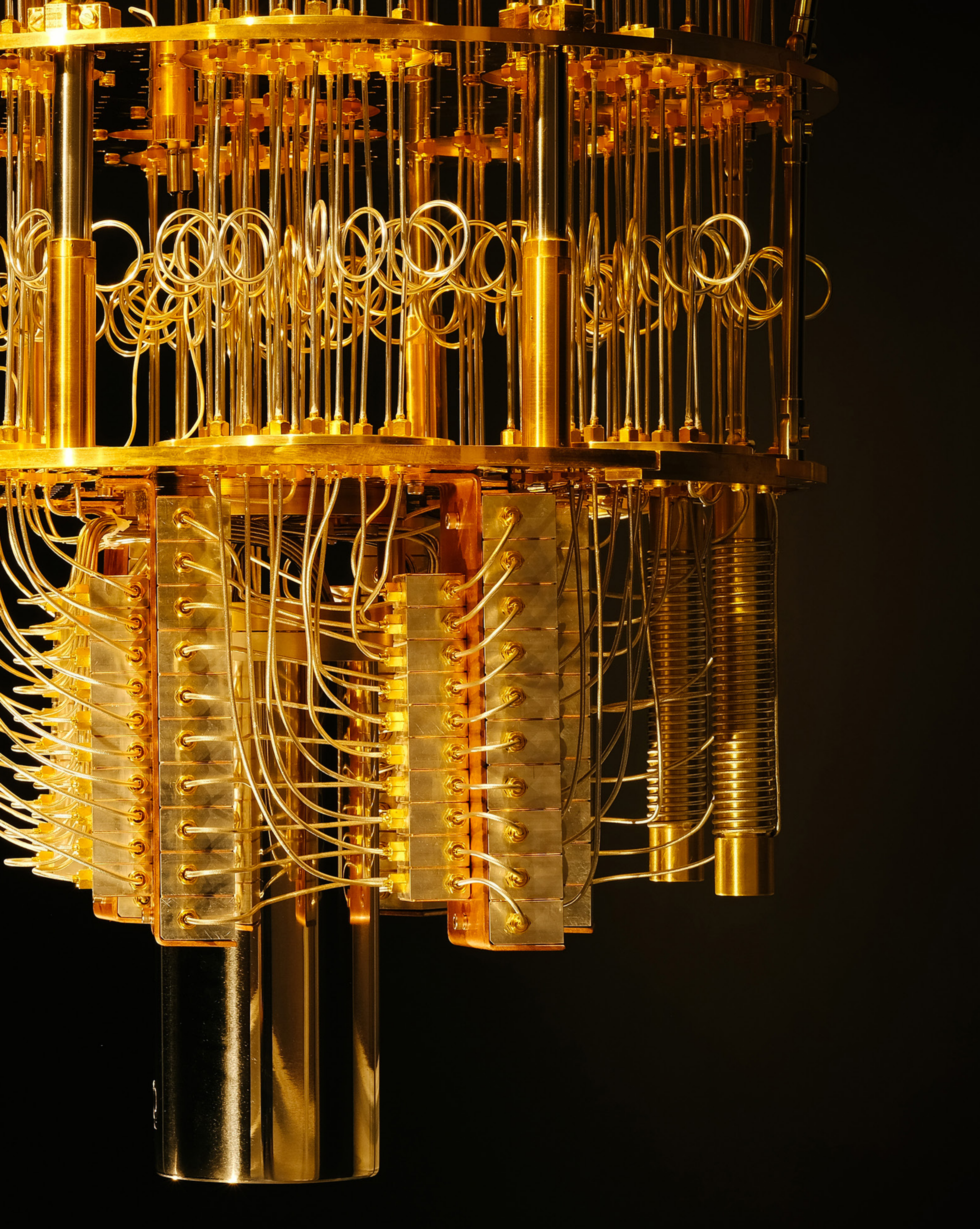
SECURING AMERICA’S QUANTUM FUTURE

Microsoft’s warning highlights the critical need to maintain U.S. leadership in quantum computing, a technology with far-reaching implications for innovation and security. The U.S.’s $1.2 billion investment and private efforts like Microsoft’s Majorana 1 position it ahead, but China’s breakthroughs, such as Origin Wukong’s 72 qubits, signal a closing gap. Smith’s call for increased federal funding, workforce expansion, and supply chain resilience aims to ensure the U.S. capitalizes on its strengths.

The quantum race demands a unified approach, blending government, industry, and academic efforts, as seen in the CHIPS Act’s support for startups like Quantinuum. With thousands of quantum research queries daily, the field’s potential to redefine computing is evident, but the U.S. must act swiftly to counter China’s momentum.

As economic and regulatory complexities mount, Microsoft’s plea underscores the urgency of securing America’s quantum future, ensuring it leads in a technology that will shape global innovation for decades.



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FACEBOOK PARENT META LAUNCHES STANDALONE AI ASSISTANT APP

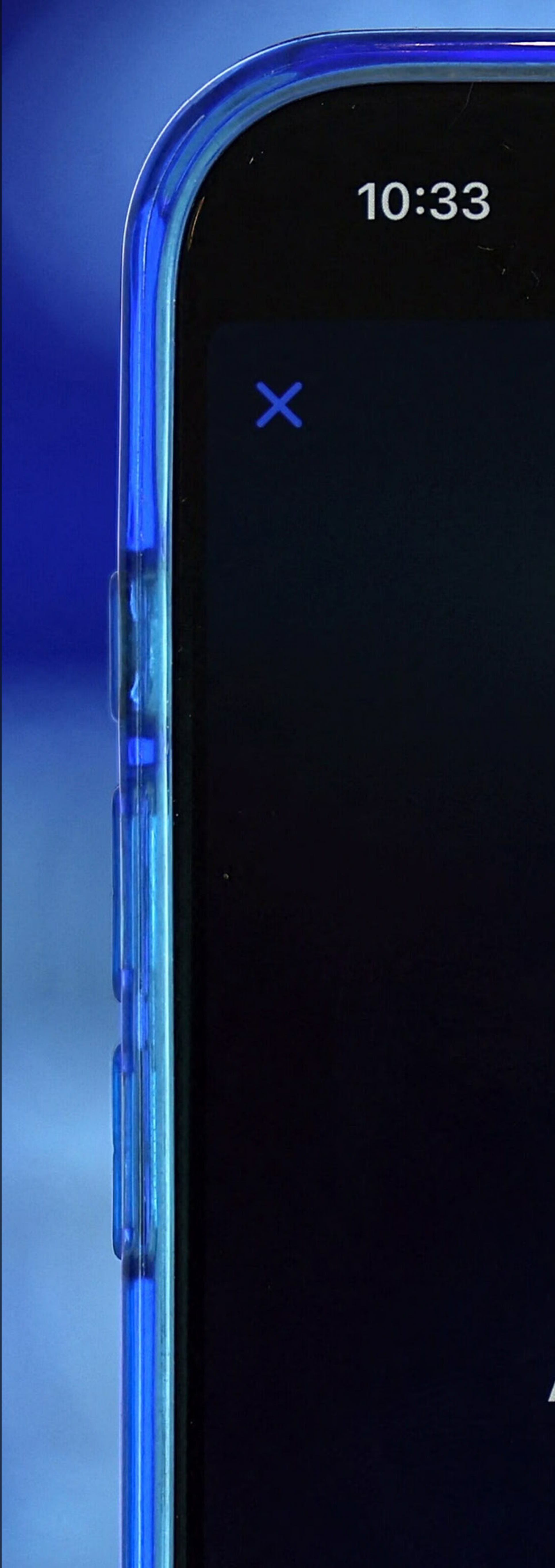
Meta

Meta Platforms has released a standalone Meta AI app, intensifying competition with OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google's Gemini, as announced this week. The app, unveiled at Meta's LlamaCon event in Menlo Park, California, allows users to interact with the AI assistant independently of Meta's existing platforms—Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Messenger. For social media users, tech enthusiasts, and industry observers, this move strengthens Meta's position in the artificial intelligence landscape, offering a dedicated tool for tasks like answering questions, generating images, and managing smart devices.

Powered by Meta's latest Llama 4 model, the app features a Discover feed showcasing user interactions with the assistant and includes voice conversation capabilities in the U.S., Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, with text-only access in 36 countries. Meta AI, launched in September 2023, has 700 million monthly active users across Meta's apps, and the standalone app aims to deepen engagement by leveraging user data from Facebook and Instagram profiles. Meta is exploring a subscription model for premium features, similar to competitors' paid tiers, though the app is currently free. With plans to reach one billion users this year, as stated by CEO Mark Zuckerberg, Meta's AI app marks a significant step in its ambition to lead the AI sector.

AI ASSISTANT APP FEATURES AND ACCESSIBILITY

The Meta AI app enables users to ask questions, create images, and manage tasks like controlling Ray-Ban Meta smart glasses. Available on



Meta AI
with Llama 3.2
Ask Meta AI anything

iOS and Android, it includes a Discover feed highlighting prompts and interactions from other users, including Instagram and Facebook contacts. Voice chat, powered by Llama 4's multilingual capabilities, is offered in four countries, while text-based interactions are accessible in 36 nations, including India, where WhatsApp usage drives significant engagement.

The app draws on user-shared data from Meta's platforms, such as profiles and liked content, to provide personalized responses. For example, it can suggest restaurants based on a user's location or preferences indicated on Instagram. Meta AI's integration into the company's apps since April 2024, replacing search functions, has scaled its reach to 700 million monthly users, positioning the standalone app to expand this audience further.

SUBSCRIPTION MODEL UNDER CONSIDERATION

Meta is testing a paid subscription service for the AI app, offering enhanced capabilities akin to OpenAI's ChatGPT Plus and Microsoft's Copilot premium tiers. Chief Financial Officer Susan Li noted potential monetization through subscriptions and premium recommendations, though no pricing details were disclosed. The current app is free, aligning with Meta's strategy to prioritize user growth before introducing paid features.

This approach mirrors competitors, with OpenAI charging for advanced ChatGPT features and Google offering Gemini's premium plan at $20 monthly. Meta's subscription could leverage its 700 million user base to generate revenue, building on the company's ad-driven model while exploring new income streams through AI services.

COMPETITION WITH CHATGPT AND GEMINI

Meta's standalone AI app directly challenges OpenAI's ChatGPT, Google's Gemini, Anthropic's Claude, and xAI's Grok, all of which offer dedicated apps. ChatGPT leads in app downloads, per Sensor Tower's 2025 report, while Google's Gemini app, launched for iOS in November 2024, and xAI's Grok iOS app, debuted in January 2025, have gained traction. Meta's app differentiates itself by using user data from its social platforms to tailor responses, unlike rivals relying solely on query-based inputs.

Zuckerberg's goal to make Meta AI the leading assistant by year-end drives this launch, with Llama 4 designed to match the reasoning and efficiency of OpenAI's and Google's models. The app's Discover feed, showing how others use the assistant, aims to make AI interactions more social and accessible, setting it apart from competitors' standalone tools.

PERSONALIZED RESPONSES FROM SOCIAL DATA

The Meta AI app uses data users have shared on Facebook and Instagram, such as profile details and content interactions, to deliver context-specific answers. For instance, it can recommend activities based on a user's liked posts or suggest gift ideas aligned with their interests. This personalization, available in the U.S. and Canada,

eta AI

enhances the assistant's utility for tasks like planning events or shopping.

Unlike ChatGPT or Gemini, which rely on broader web data, Meta AI's integration with user profiles offers a unique advantage, tapping into Meta's extensive social ecosystem. The app's ability to reference this data ensures responses are relevant to individual preferences, improving the user experience for tasks requiring tailored suggestions.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND EVENT SUPPORT

Meta's $65 billion planned expenditure for 2025, up from $39 billion in 2024, supports the app's infrastructure, including data centers for processing millions of daily queries. The LlamaCon event showcased Llama 4's capabilities, with developers testing the model's performance in real-time applications. The app's launch, timed with Meta's first-quarter earnings report, reflects confidence in its AI investments, despite the significant costs.

The Discover feed and voice features require robust computational resources to handle user interactions and data integration from Meta's platforms. Meta's infrastructure ensures the app delivers fast responses, maintaining reliability across its global user base, particularly in high-traffic markets like India.

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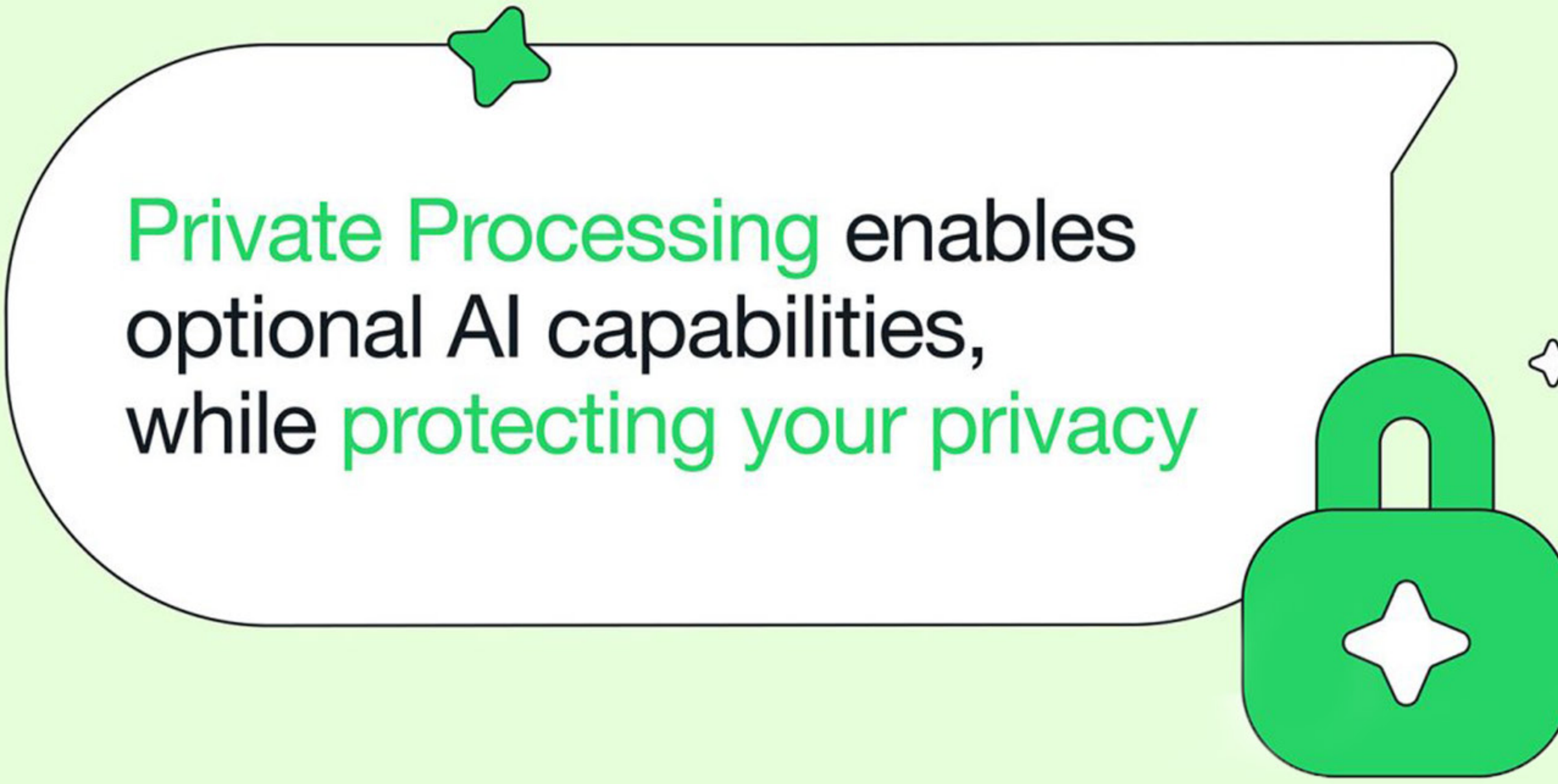
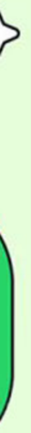
WHATSAPP ADOPTS APPLE'S PRIVATE CLOUD COMPUTE MODEL FOR AI PRIVACY

Meta's WhatsApp has introduced a new system called Private Processing to enable AI features while preserving user privacy, mirroring Apple's Private Cloud Compute approach, as announced this week.

The system, designed to maintain the end-to-end encryption of WhatsApp chats, allows cloud-based AI tasks like message summarization without exposing user data to Meta or third parties.

For WhatsApp's global user base, privacy advocates, and tech industry observers, this development addresses concerns about AI integration in the encrypted messaging


Private Processing enables optional AI capabilities, while protecting your privacy



app, which has faced criticism for adding an unremovable AI chatbot.

Private Processing uses a Confidential Virtual Machine within a Trusted Execution Environment, encrypting data end-to-end between the user's device and the server.

It employs stateless computation, erasing data after processing, and supports independent audits by security researchers to verify privacy claims. The move follows user backlash over the Meta AI chatbot's presence in WhatsApp, with complaints likening it to Apple's 2014 U2 album controversy.

Available on iOS and Android, Private Processing aims to balance AI functionality with WhatsApp's privacy commitments, aligning with Apple's privacy-first AI strategy.

PRIVATE PROCESSING SYSTEM DESIGN

WhatsApp's Private Processing system operates within a Confidential Virtual Machine in a Trusted Execution Environment, ensuring end-to-end encryption for AI tasks. Data sent for processing, such as message summarization, is encrypted with an ephemeral key accessible only to the user's device and the server, preventing Meta or intermediaries from viewing it. The system uses Oblivious HTTP and third-party routing to anonymize requests, protecting user IP addresses.

Once processing is complete, the system wipes the data, employing stateless computation to ensure no retention, as detailed in Meta's engineering blog. This design replicates Apple's Private Cloud Compute, which prioritizes on-device AI processing and encrypts cloud data.

AI CHATBOT INTEGRATION AND USER CONCERNS

Meta integrated an AI chatbot into WhatsApp, enabling features like message summarization and response suggestions, but users cannot disable or remove it.

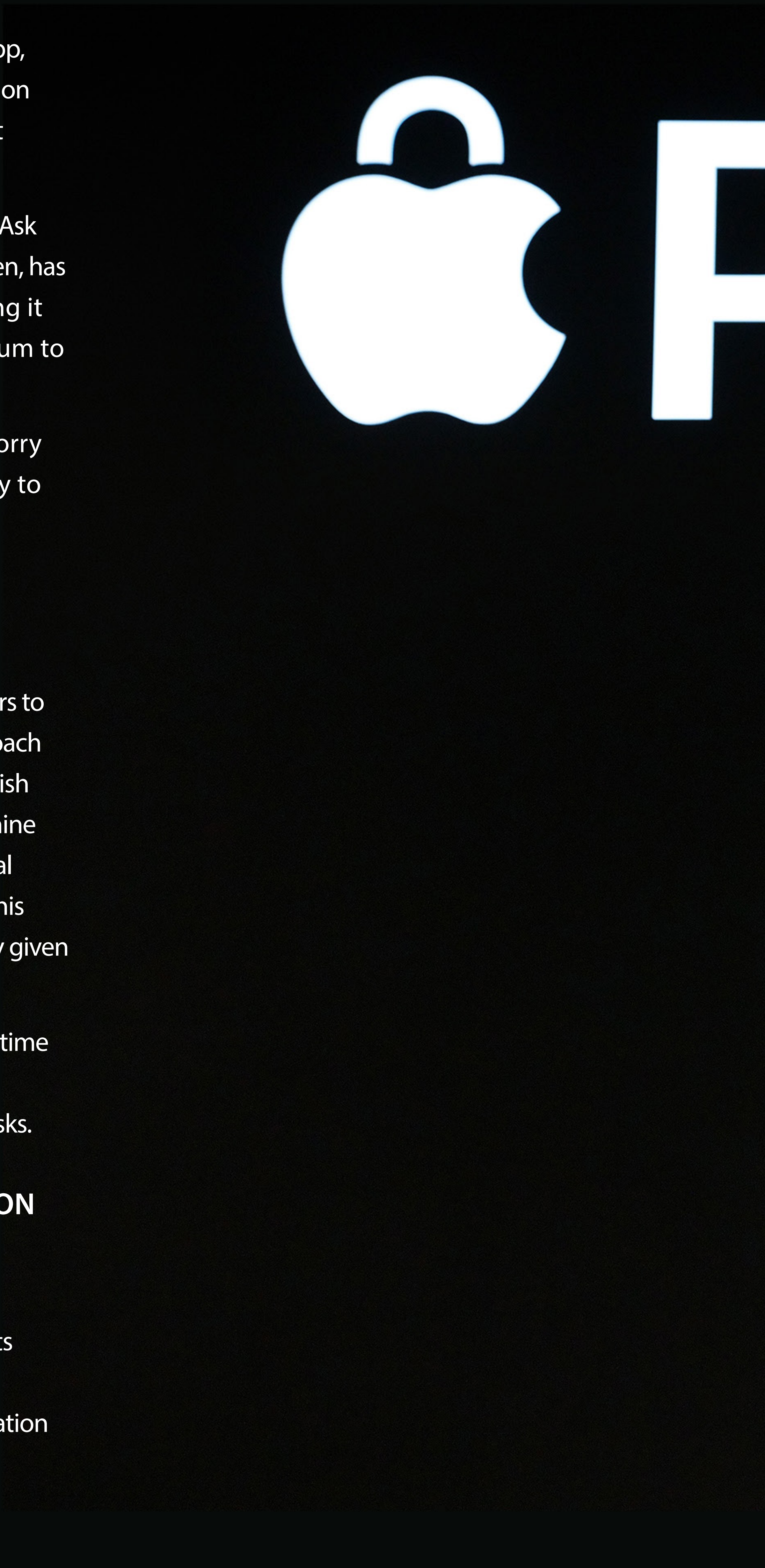
The chatbot, visible as a Meta AI logo or an "Ask Meta AI or Search" prompt in the chats screen, has sparked frustration, with some comparing it to Apple's 2014 decision to add a U2 album to users' devices without consent.

Despite end-to-end encryption, users worry about privacy due to the chatbot's ability to read shared messages.

INDEPENDENT AUDIT AND VERIFICATION

Private Processing allows security researchers to audit its operations, mirroring Apple's approach with Private Cloud Compute. Meta will publish third-party logs of Confidential Virtual Machine binary digests and images, enabling external verification of privacy and security claims. This transparency aims to build trust, particularly given Meta's history of privacy controversies.

The system's design prevents privileged runtime access, prohibiting remote shell access and implementing code isolation to minimize risks.



ENCRYPTION AND DATA PROTECTION MEASURES

The system uses end-to-end encryption for all data processed in the cloud, with requests routed through an Oblivious HTTP relay to anonymize user identities. A Remote Attestation

Privacy

and Transport Layer Security session verifies the server's code against a third-party ledger, ensuring only authorized software handles data. Limited service reliability logs are permitted, preventing user data leakage.

These measures, including non-targetability to prevent user-specific attacks, align with Apple's Private Cloud Compute, which uses similar encryption and stateless processing to safeguard data during AI tasks.

COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE AND PRIVACY FOCUS

WhatsApp's adoption of Private Processing follows Apple's Private Cloud Compute, introduced in 2024 for Apple Intelligence, which emphasizes on-device AI with encrypted cloud processing when needed.

Competitors like OpenAI and Google, offering cloud-based AI without comparable privacy safeguards, face criticism for data exposure risks. WhatsApp's system, purpose-built for its 3 billion users across diverse devices, contrasts with Apple's hardware-specific approach, as noted by Meta engineers.

The launch addresses user privacy concerns while competing with AI-driven platforms, ensuring WhatsApp maintains its encryption standards amid growing demand for secure, AI-enhanced messaging.

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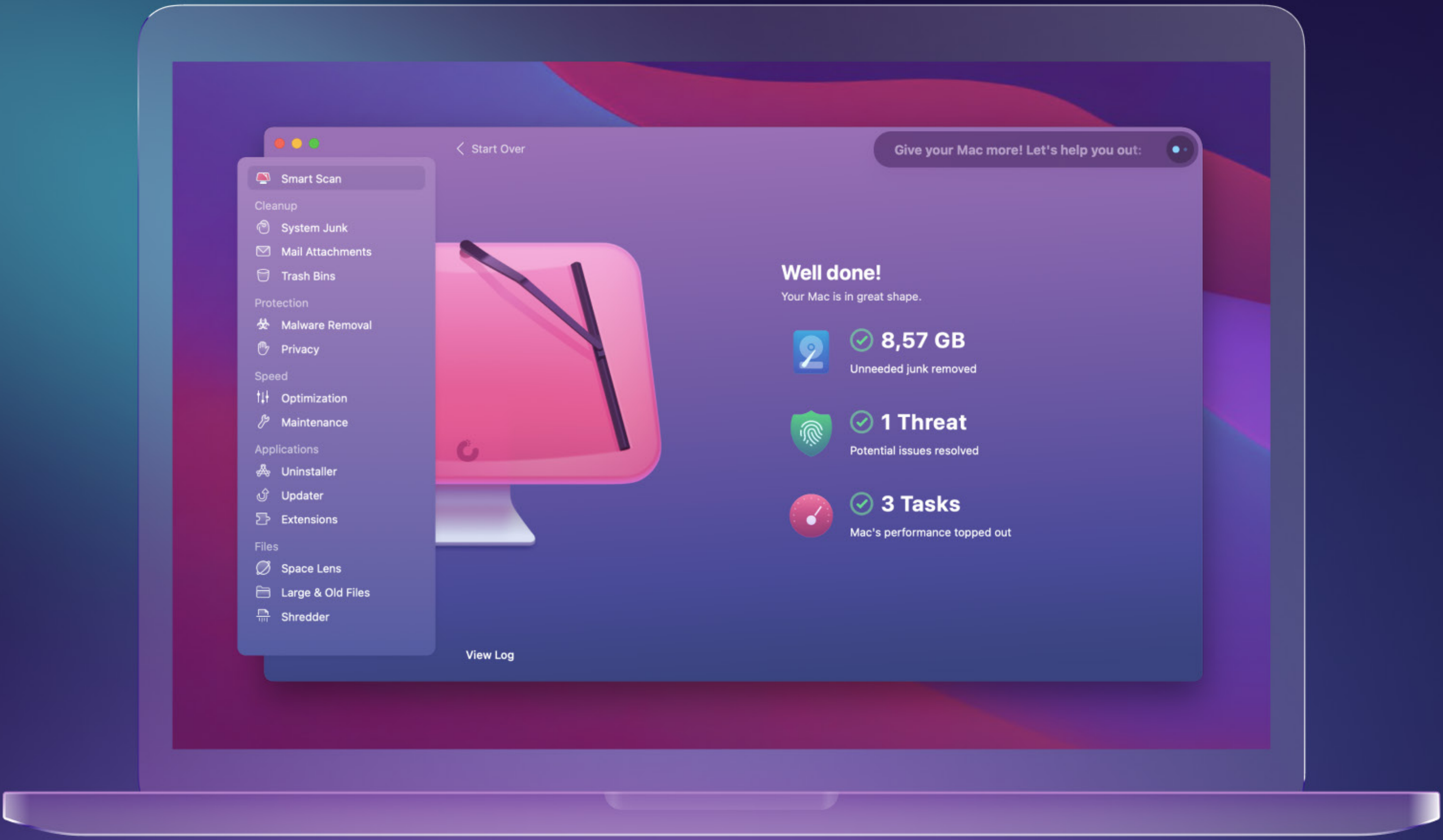
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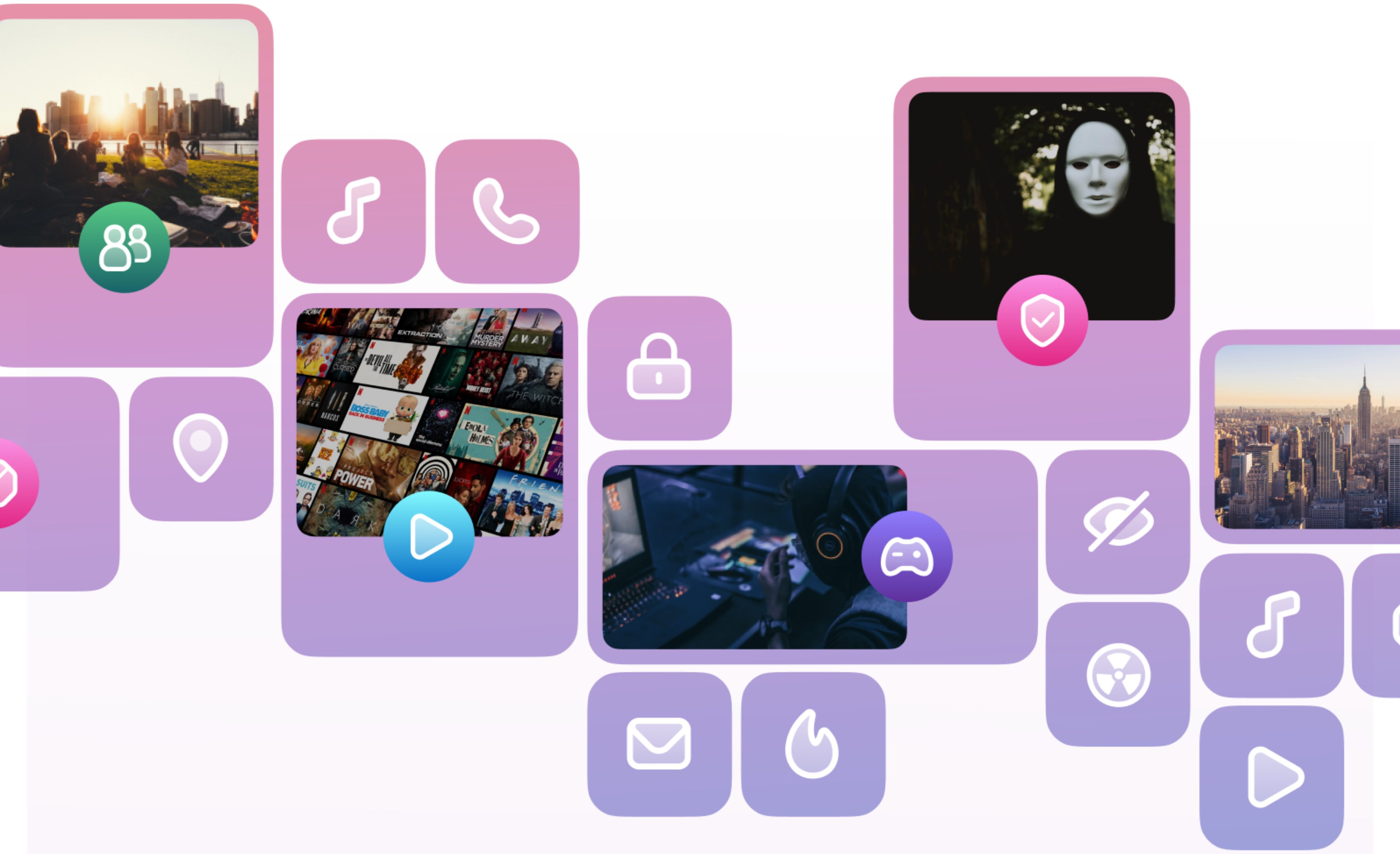

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Social Search

THE NEW HABITS RESHAPING THE FUTURE OF THE INTERNET

TikTok, Instagram, and Reddit are evolving from engagement hubs into powerful search tools. This transformation, driven by changing consumer behaviors and technological advancements, redefines how users discover information, products, and brands. With the rise of AI and platforms like X, it's clear that Google's time at the top could soon be up.

THE RISE OF SOCIAL SEARCH

According to Sprout Social, **41% of users leverage TikTok for search** while **76% have discovered brands through social media.** What's more, the integration of artificial intelligence into social search is poised to disrupt traditional search engines like Google and Yahoo even further, with platforms like X.com emerging as potential leaders in this convergence of social, AI, and search functionalities.

Social search has transformed platforms once known for entertainment into primary destinations for information and discovery. A 2024 Forbes Advisor and Talker Research survey of 2,000 Americans revealed that **24% use social media as their primary search tool,** with 46% of Gen Z and 35% of Millennials favoring platforms like TikTok and Instagram over Google. Gen Z is 25% less likely to use Google for searches compared to Gen X, with only 64% using search engines for brand discovery versus 94% of Baby Boomers. Meanwhile, 57% of users turn to YouTube for information, rivaling Google's dominance. These statistics outline a generational shift toward platforms offering quick, visually engaging, and authentic content.

Unlike traditional search engines, social platforms provide a personalized, interactive experience. TikTok's algorithm, for instance, delivers short-form videos tailored to user preferences, with 40% of Gen Z using it for searches like hair and makeup tips or gift ideas. Instagram's Explore page curates fashion-focused content, with 12% of searches targeting brands, while Reddit's community-driven threads offer niche insights. The real-time nature of social media, coupled

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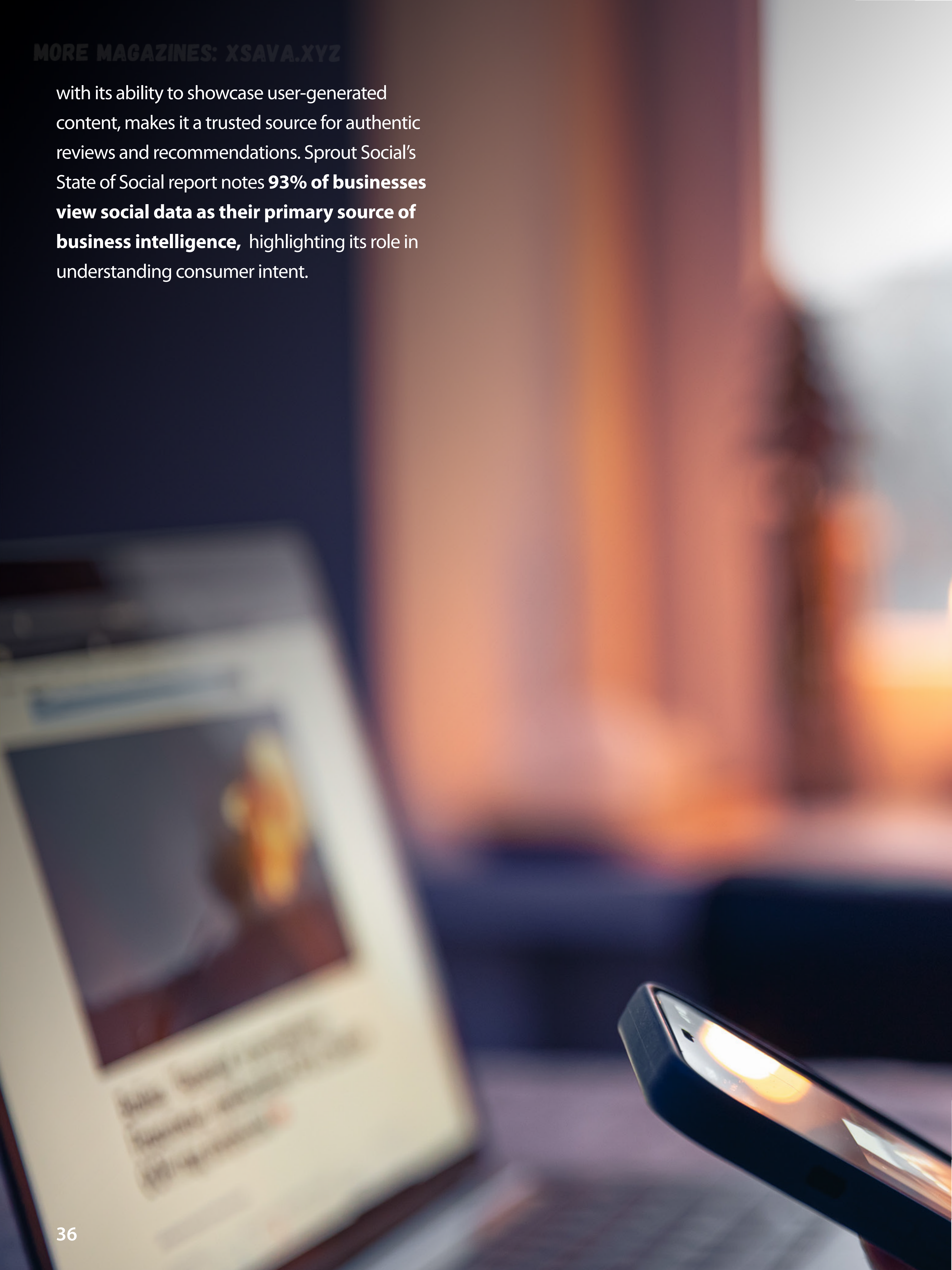
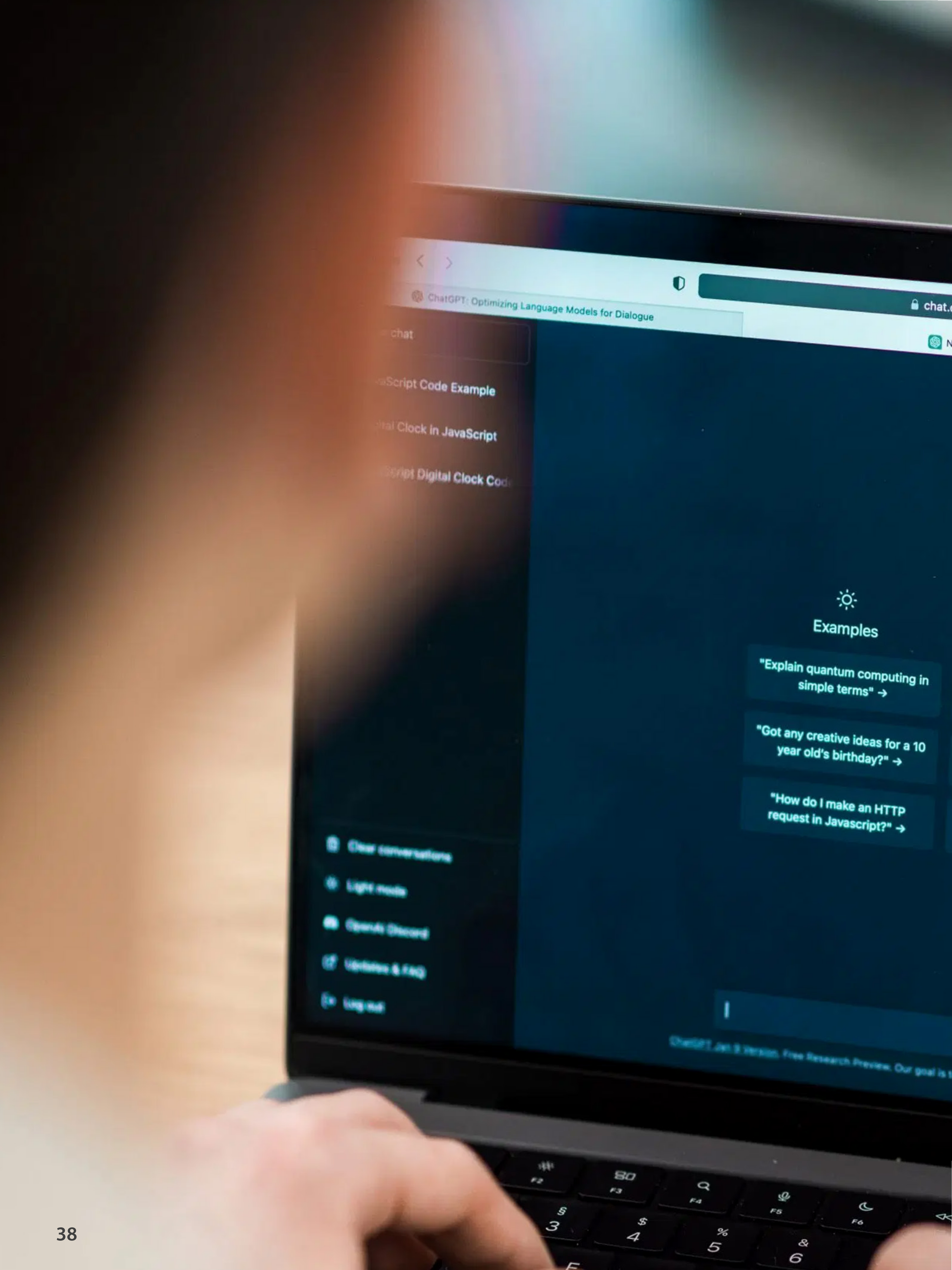
with its ability to showcase user-generated content, makes it a trusted source for authentic reviews and recommendations. Sprout Social's State of Social report notes **93% of businesses view social data as their primary source of business intelligence,** highlighting its role in understanding consumer intent.

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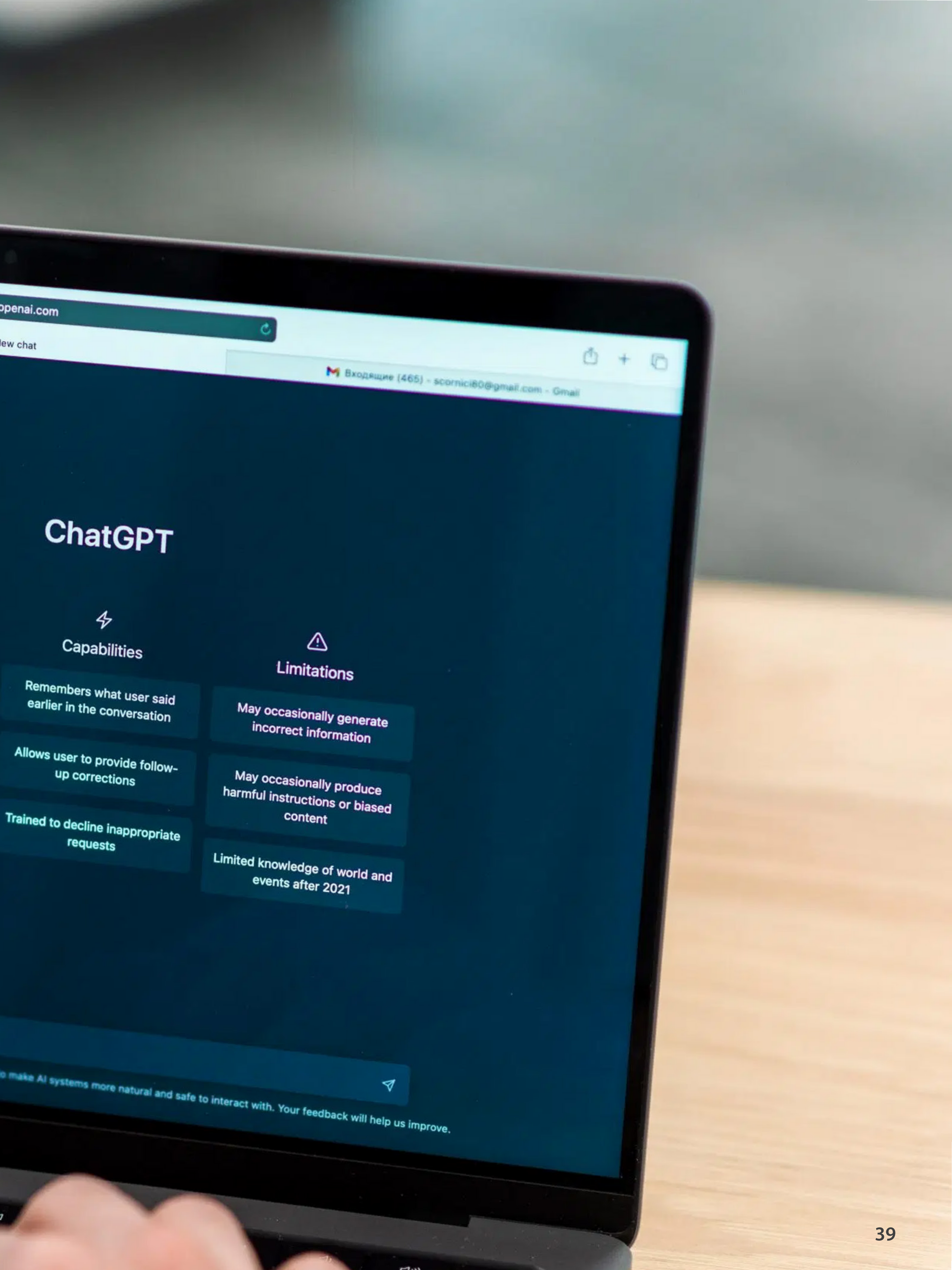
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ChatGPT

Capabilities

Remembers what user said earlier in the conversation

Allows user to provide follow-up corrections

Trained to decline inappropriate requests

Limitations

May occasionally generate incorrect information

May occasionally produce harmful instructions or biased content

Limited knowledge of world and events after 2021

o make AI systems more natural and safe to interact with. Your feedback will help us improve.

Allows user to provide follow-up corrections
Trained to decline inappropriate requests
AI

AI'S ROLE IN SEARCH

AI supercharges social search, enabling platforms to deliver hyper-personalized results and anticipate user needs. Powered by machine learning, TikTok's algorithm analyzes user interactions to curate content on its For You page, often introducing products before users actively search for them. Instagram and Pinterest use AI to suggest visually relevant content based on browsing behavior, while Reddit's recommendation systems surface trending discussions. These capabilities blur the lines between search and discovery, creating a seamless experience that traditional search engines struggle to match.

Beyond personalization, AI enhances search functionality through natural language processing and semantic analysis. Facebook Groups leverage Meta's AI to recommend relevant communities and surface real-time web information, making them hubs for niche searches. As AI evolves, platforms integrate generative AI models, like ChatGPT, Grok, and Google's Gemini, which provide conversational search experiences, further challenging legacy search engines. The integration of AI also extends to content creation and optimization. Brands can use AI-driven tools to generate captions, hashtags, and alt text that align with trending topics, boosting discoverability. For example, TikTok's analytics tools provide insights into high-performing content, enabling marketers to tailor videos to user preferences. As AI becomes more sophisticated, it will allow predictive search, where platforms anticipate user queries based on behavioral patterns, further cementing social media's role as a primary search tool.

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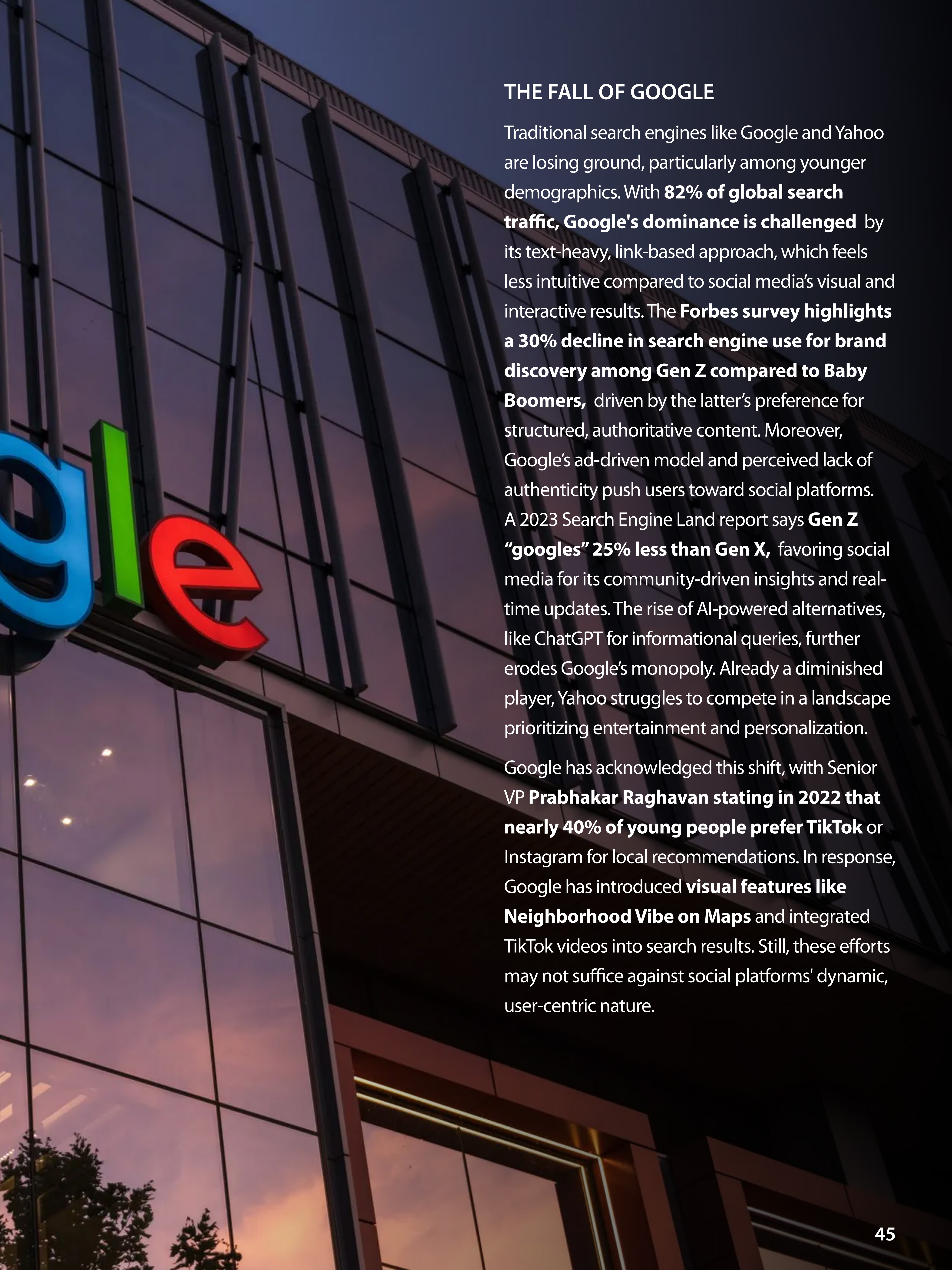
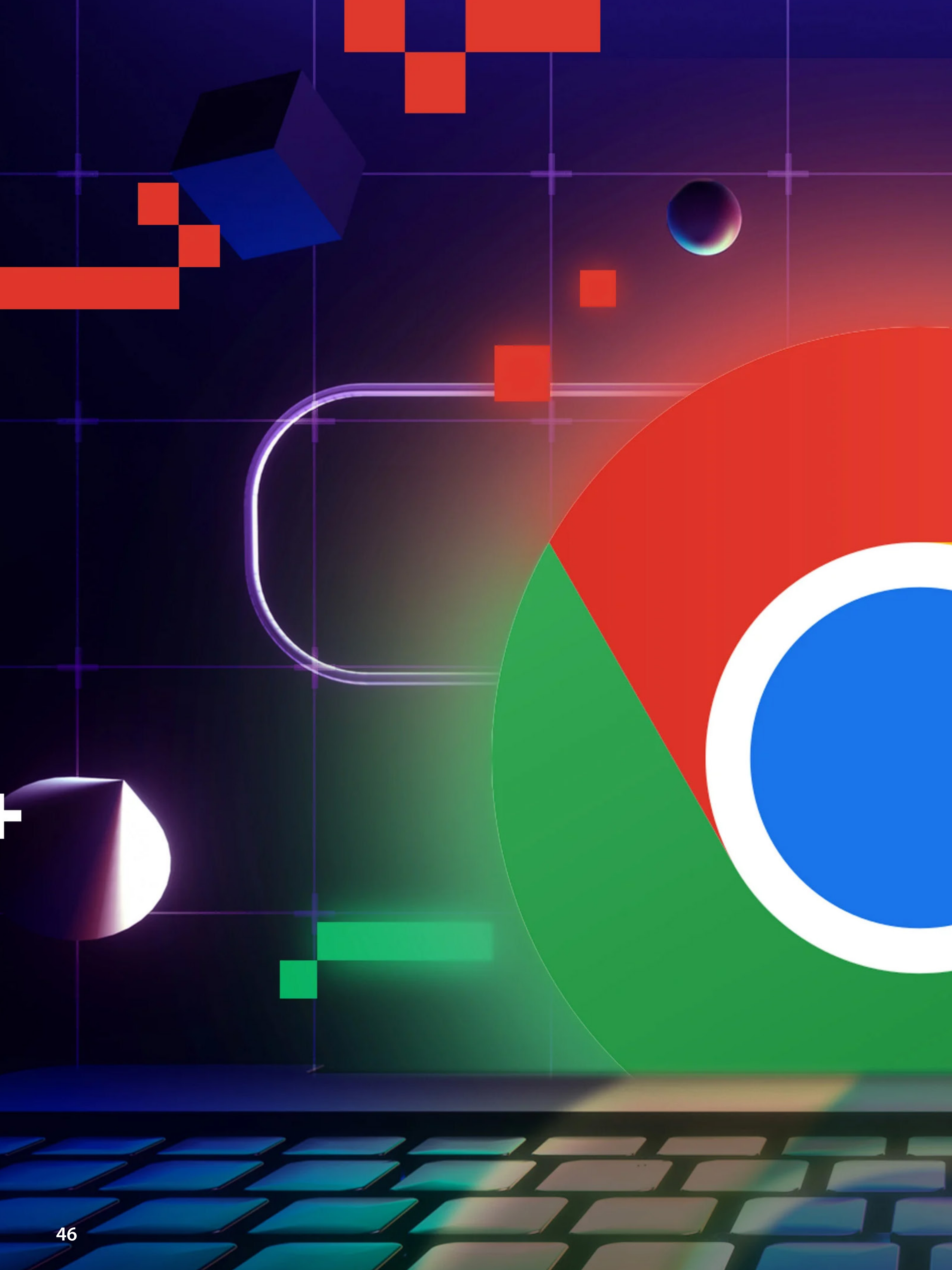


THE FALL OF GOOGLE

Traditional search engines like Google and Yahoo are losing ground, particularly among younger demographics. With **82% of global search traffic, Google's dominance is challenged** by its text-heavy, link-based approach, which feels less intuitive compared to social media's visual and interactive results. The **Forbes survey highlights a 30% decline in search engine use for brand discovery among Gen Z compared to Baby Boomers,** driven by the latter's preference for structured, authoritative content. Moreover, Google's ad-driven model and perceived lack of authenticity push users toward social platforms. A 2023 Search Engine Land report says **Gen Z "googles" 25% less than Gen X,** favoring social media for its community-driven insights and real-time updates. The rise of AI-powered alternatives, like ChatGPT for informational queries, further erodes Google's monopoly. Already a diminished player, Yahoo struggles to compete in a landscape prioritizing entertainment and personalization.

Google has acknowledged this shift, with Senior VP **Prabhakar Raghavan stating in 2022 that nearly 40% of young people prefer TikTok** or Instagram for local recommendations. In response, Google has introduced **visual features like Neighborhood Vibe on Maps** and integrated TikTok videos into search results. Still, these efforts may not suffice against social platforms' dynamic, user-centric nature.



THE POWER OF X

Under Elon Musk's vision, X is positioning itself as a leader in the convergence of social media, AI, and search. Unlike traditional platforms, X aims to be an "everything app," combining real-time social interactions, AI-driven insights, and robust search capabilities. Grok, xAI's conversational AI, enables it to deliver real-time, context-aware responses rivaling social search platforms and legacy search engines. X's strength is its ability to aggregate diverse content (posts, videos, and trending topics) while leveraging AI to surface relevant results. Unlike TikTok's entertainment focus or Instagram's visual emphasis, X prioritizes information density, making it a go-to for news, opinions, and niche discussions. Its search functionality, enhanced by Grok, can process complex queries and provide synthesized answers, reducing the need to navigate multiple platforms. For instance, users searching for product reviews on X can access real-time posts, influencer opinions, and AI-generated summaries, creating a one-stop discovery hub.

The battle for digital dominance pits **X against Meta,** the parent company of Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. Meta's strength lies in its vast user base, over 3.2 billion monthly active users in 2024, and advanced AI infrastructure. Instagram's Explore page and Facebook Groups are powerful search tools, using Meta's AI to deliver real-time web data. Meta's investment in generative AI, including its LLaMA models, positions it to enhance search personalization across its platforms, potentially outpacing TikTok's algorithm-driven approach. However, Meta faces challenges. Its ad-heavy ecosystem and privacy controversies may deter users

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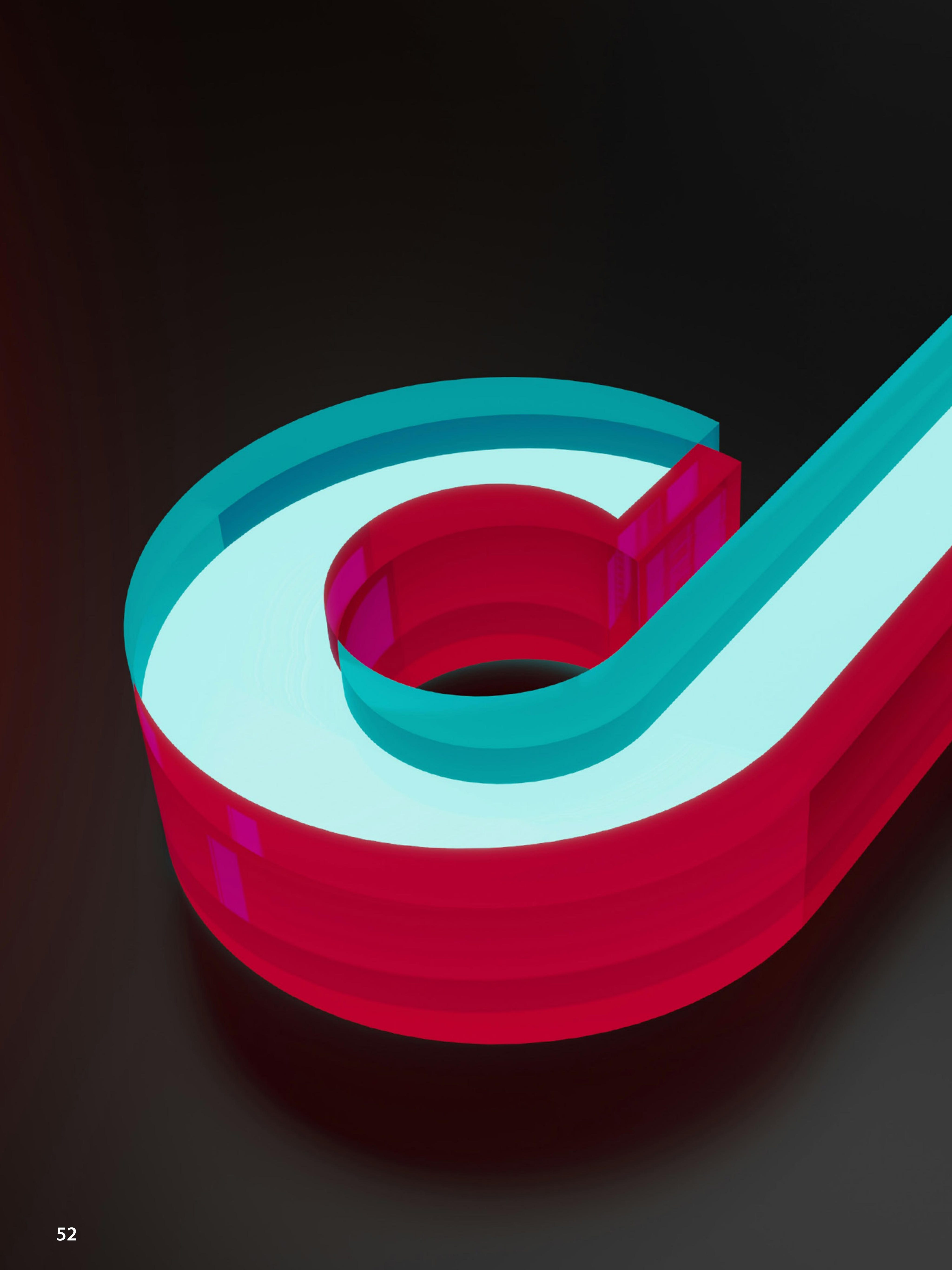
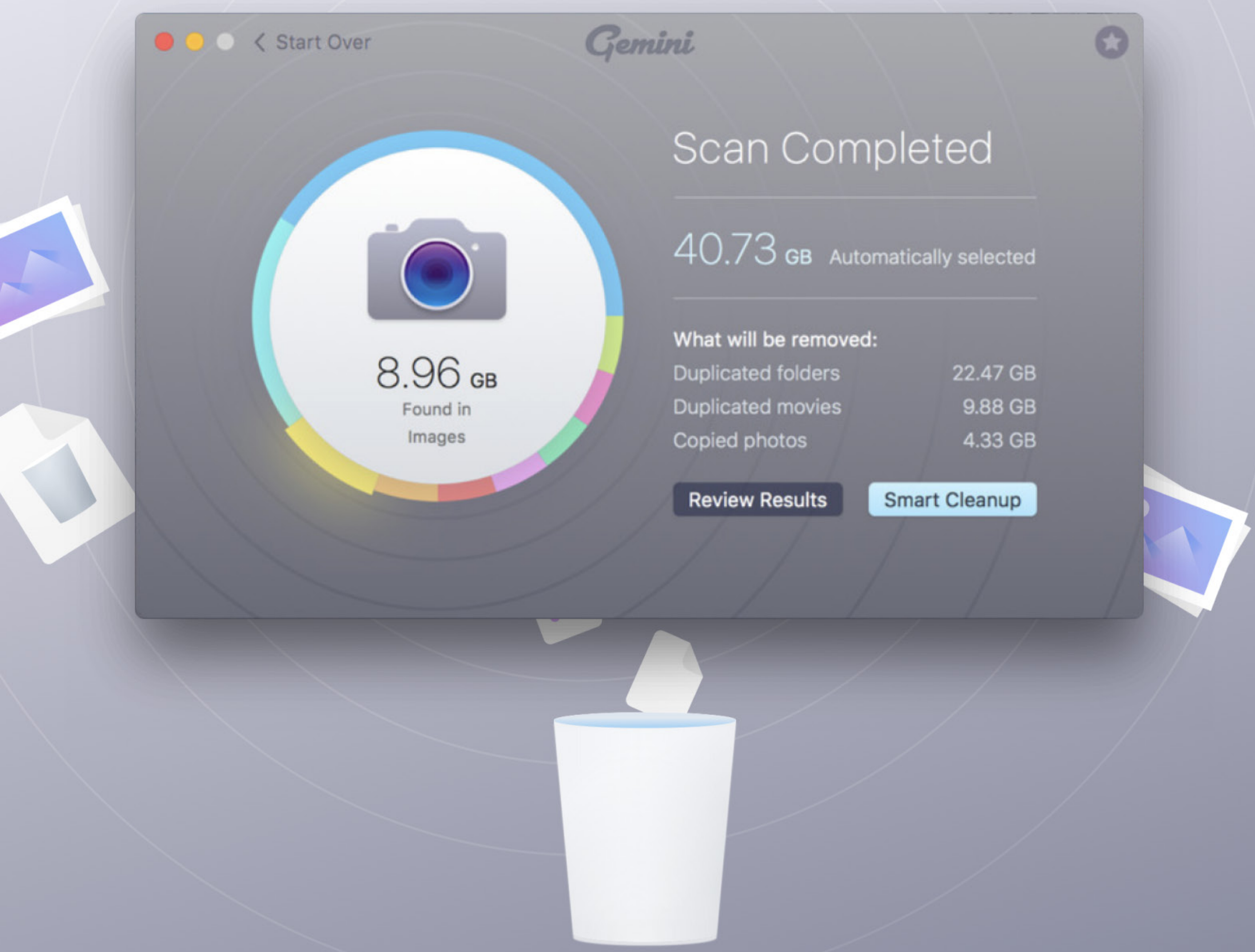


seeking authentic experiences, a cornerstone of social search. Instagram's shift away from hashtags, as noted by Adam Mosseri in 2024, could limit discoverability for brands, while **Facebook's aging demographic hinders its appeal to Gen Z.**

On the other hand, X benefits from its nimble structure and Musk's focus on innovation. Grok's integration gives it an edge in conversational search, while its decentralized ethos resonates with users wary of corporate gatekeeping. Yet, X must overcome scalability hurdles and content moderation concerns to rival Meta's established infrastructure. The 2025 rollout of X's enhanced search features, including AI-powered trend analysis and cross-platform content aggregation, could tip the scales in its favor.

The convergence of social search and AI is reshaping the internet, with X poised to lead by blending real-time social engagement, AI-driven insights, and comprehensive search. Meta's established ecosystem remains a formidable contender, but its reliance on legacy platforms may hinder its agility.

While still relevant, traditional search engines like Google and Yahoo face an uphill battle against the authenticity and personalization. And with brands like Apple rumored to enter the search space in the coming years, Google's dominance could be over.



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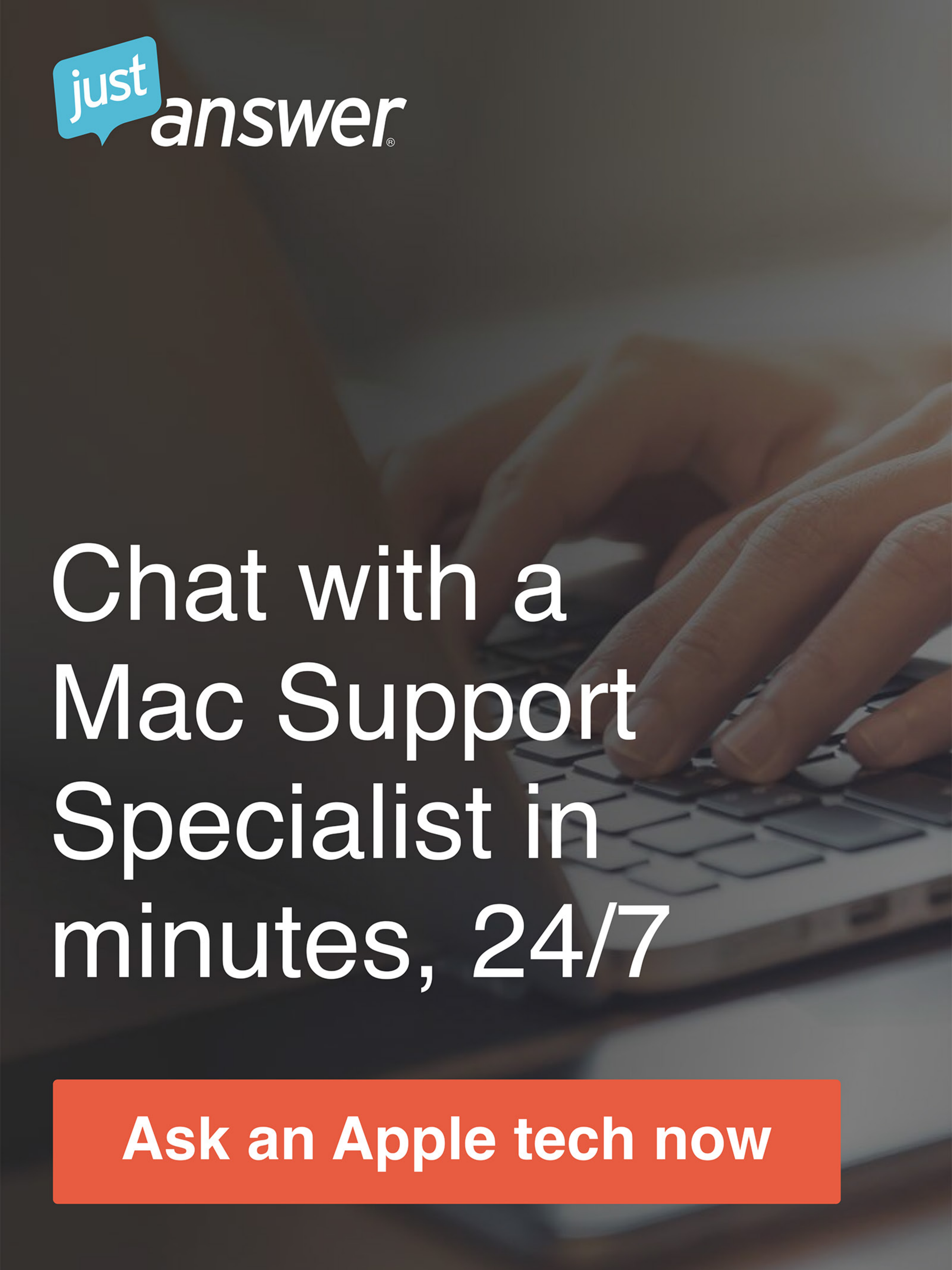

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CHATGPT SEARCH INTRODUCES AI-POWERED SHOPPING FEATURES

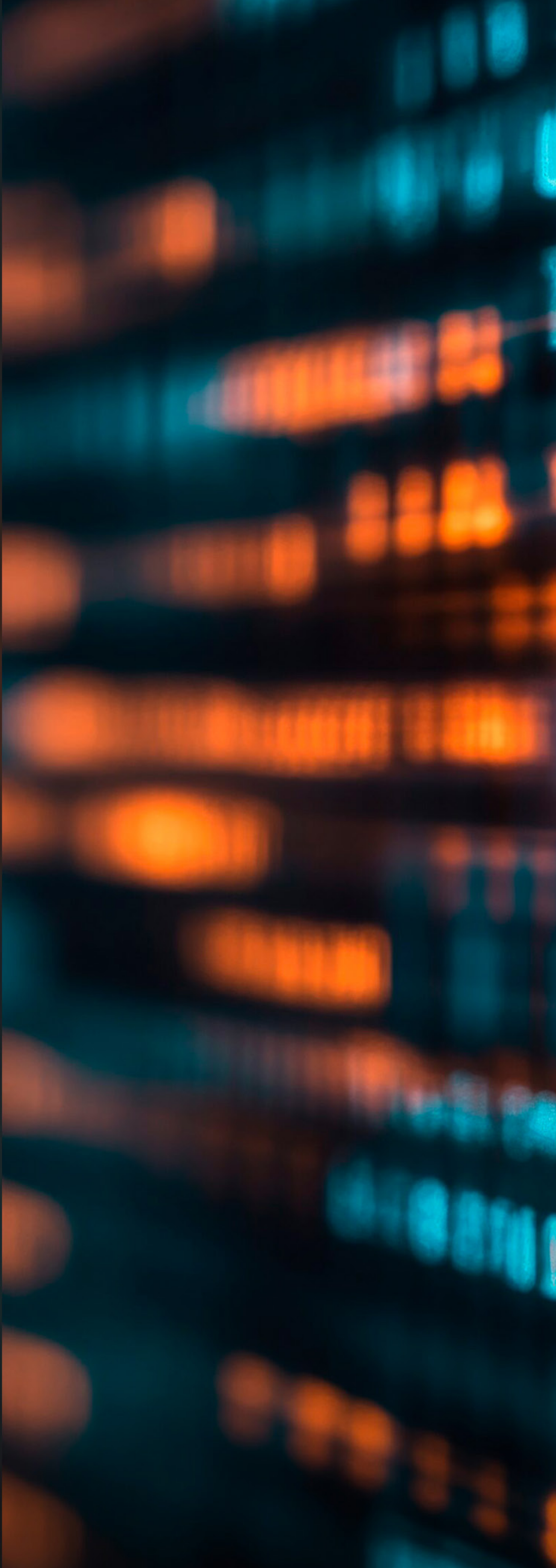
OpenAI has launched an update to ChatGPT Search, introducing AI-powered shopping features that enable users to find and purchase products through conversational queries, as announced this week. The enhancement allows users to search for items across categories like fashion, beauty, home goods, and electronics using natural language, delivering tailored recommendations with visual details and direct purchase links. For online shoppers, retailers, and technology observers, this development offers a new approach to e-commerce, leveraging ChatGPT's capabilities to provide a streamlined, user-focused experience.

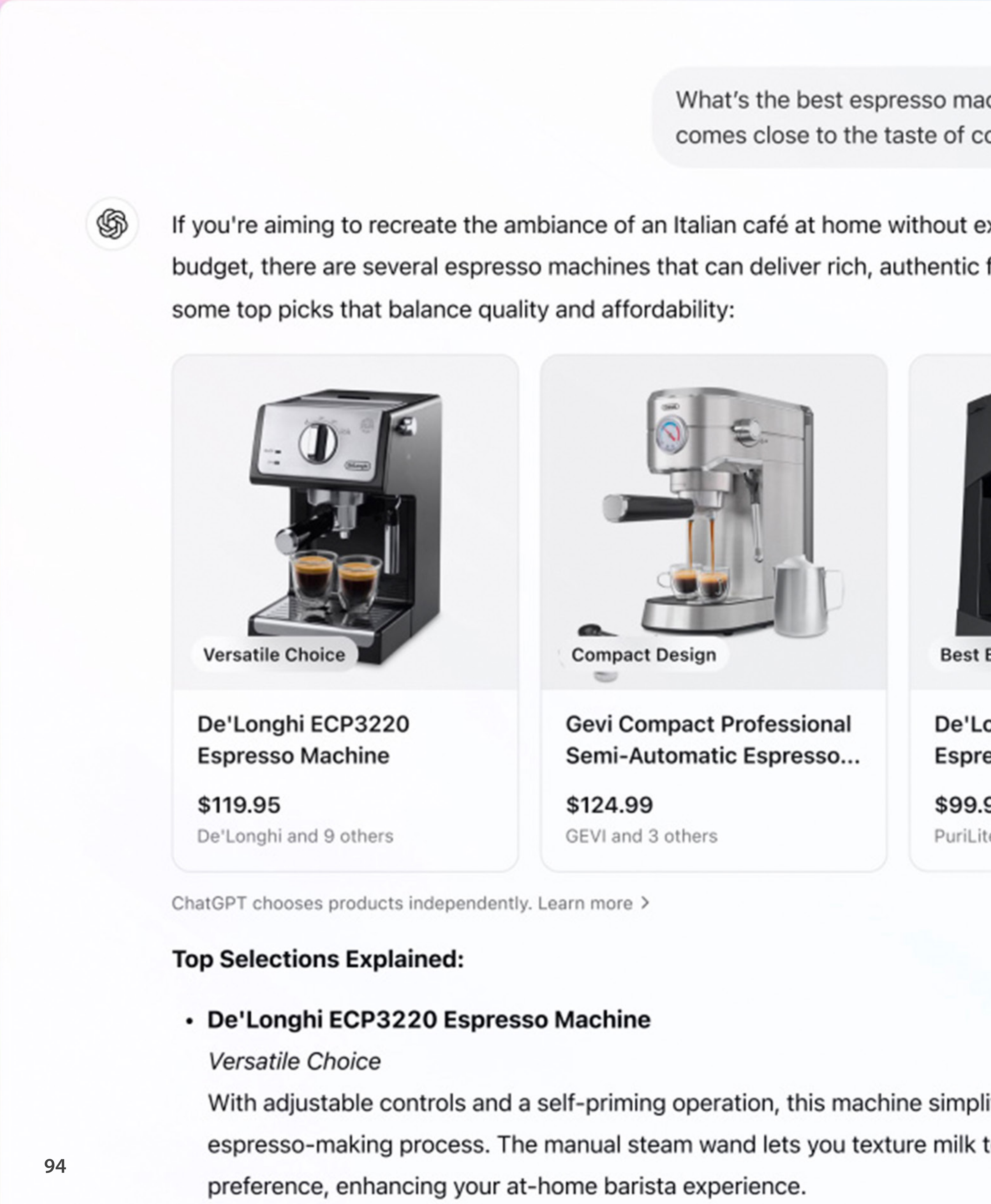
The update, available to all ChatGPT users—Pro, Plus, Free, and logged-out—globally, processes queries like "find a summer dress under $50" to present curated product lists with images, pricing, and reviews. Unlike traditional search engines that rely on keyword matches and ads, ChatGPT Search prioritizes relevance, operating without sponsored listings. This ad-free model, combined with interactive tools for refining searches, aims to address common frustrations in online shopping, enhancing efficiency and trust.

OpenAI's infrastructure supports the update's rapid processing, handling millions of daily searches to deliver results in seconds. The company's focus on conversational search reflects a broader shift toward AI-driven retail, challenging established platforms while meeting consumer demands for personalized, transparent shopping experiences.

NATURAL LANGUAGE SEARCH FOR PRODUCTS

ChatGPT Search allows users to ask specific questions, such as "show me wireless headphones with noise cancellation" or "find a vegan leather backpack." The AI responds with a curated list of products, including images, prices, and summarized reviews, drawn from product metadata like descriptions and ratings. This conversational method understands user preferences, such as budget or style, delivering results that align with the query's intent.





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budget, there are several espresso machines that can deliver rich, authentic f
some top picks that balance quality and affordability:

Versatile Choice

De'Longhi ECP3220 Espresso Machine

$119.95

De'Longhi and 9 others

Compact Design

Gevi Compact Professional Semi-Automatic Espresso...

$124.99

GEVI and 3 others

Best E

De'Lo
Espre

$99.9

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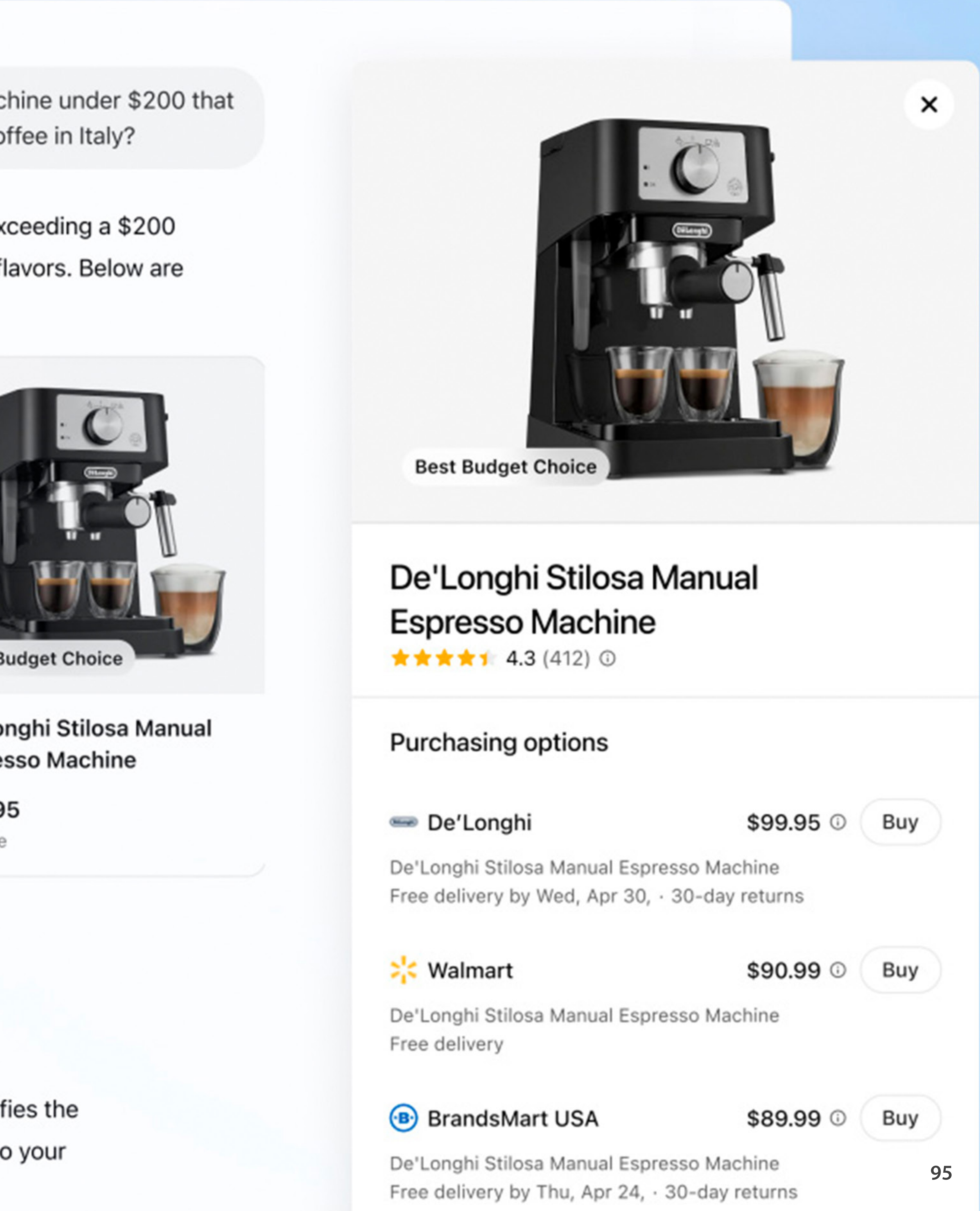
ChatGPT chooses products independently. Learn more >

Top Selections Explained:

- **De'Longhi ECP3220 Espresso Machine**
  Versatile Choice
  With adjustable controls and a self-priming operation, this machine simpli
  espresso-making process. The manual steam wand lets you texture milk t
  preference, enhancing your at-home barista experience.



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Users can refine searches through follow-up questions, like asking about battery life or color options, without navigating multiple websites. The system presents a carousel of recommendations, enabling quick comparisons of items from various retailers. This approach reduces the time spent browsing compared to traditional searches, which often require sifting through irrelevant listings.

The feature's design leverages OpenAI's natural language processing to interpret nuanced requests, ensuring accurate matches for diverse product categories, from clothing to tech gadgets.

VISUAL AND PURCHASE INFORMATION

The update includes a sidebar with high-quality product images, pricing, and condensed reviews, providing a clear overview for decision-making. Users can view multiple purchasing options, such as different retailers or product variants, with direct links to complete transactions on external sites. This visual layout is accessible to all ChatGPT users, supporting both casual shoppers and those seeking specific items.

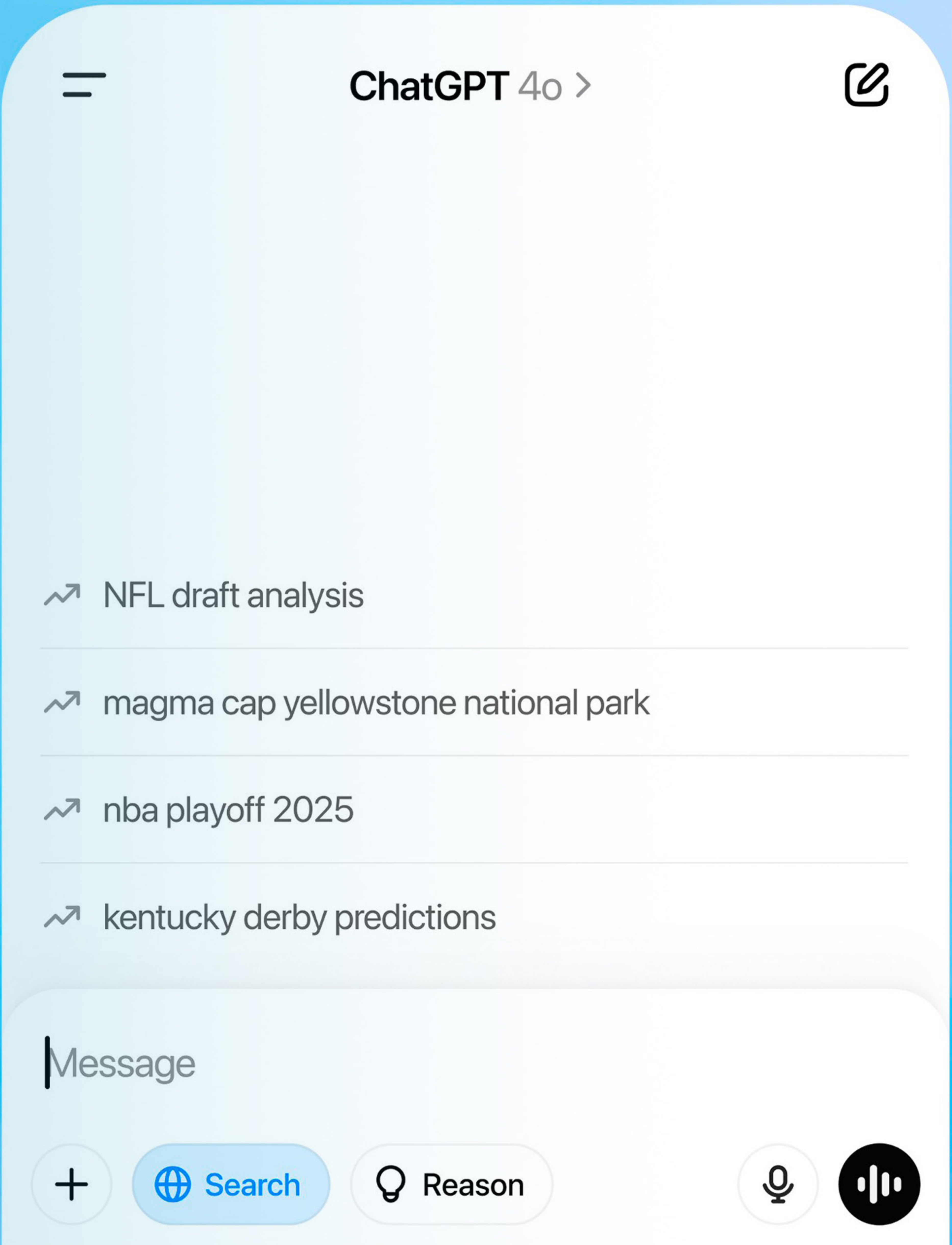
Shoppers can explore details like material specifications or customer feedback without leaving the search interface. For example, a user searching for a coffee maker sees images of models alongside prices and review highlights, simplifying comparisons. The feature draws on OpenAI's ability to process structured data, delivering information in a concise, user-friendly format.

AD-FREE SEARCH MODEL

ChatGPT Search operates without advertisements, selecting product results based on relevance using metadata like pricing and reviews, rather than paid placements. OpenAI's CEO, Sam Altman, highlighted the commitment to an ad-free model, ensuring recommendations remain unbiased. The company is considering affiliate fees for purchases made through ChatGPT, but only if they do not influence result rankings, maintaining transparency.

The absence of sponsored listings differentiates ChatGPT Search from platforms where ads often prioritize less relevant products.

This focus on user-driven results caters to shoppers seeking trustworthy recommendations, particularly in categories like beauty and electronics where authenticity matters.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nba playoff 2025

kentucky derby predictions

Plan A
Plan B
Plan C
Plan D
AI

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR RAPID PROCESSING

The shopping update relies on significant computational power to process millions of daily queries, requiring robust infrastructure. OpenAI's data centers handle this demand, delivering search results in seconds to ensure a responsive user experience.

The system's ability to generate curated product lists quickly depends on optimized cloud architecture, supporting a range of query complexities.

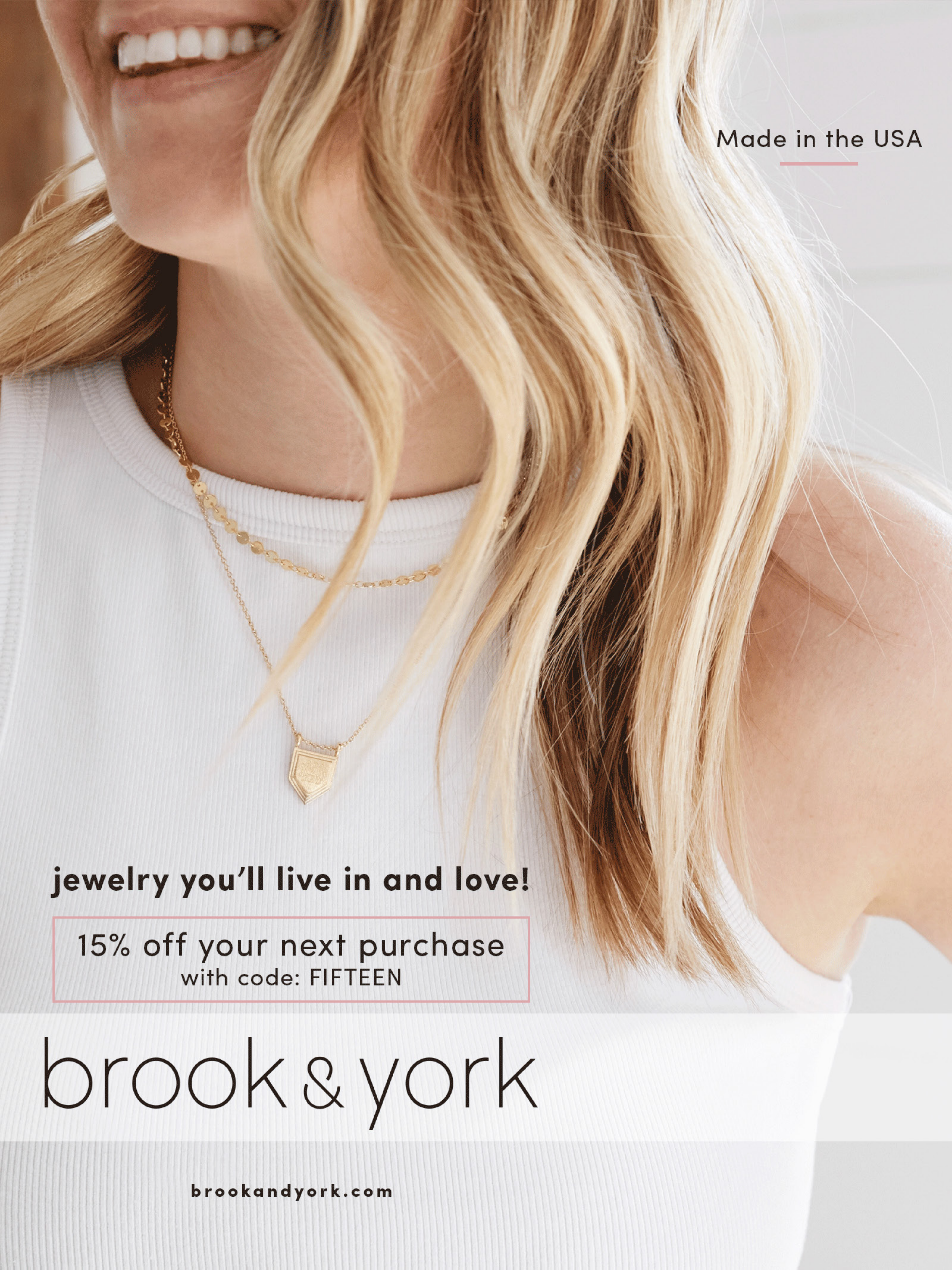
The infrastructure accommodates searches from broad categories like home goods to specific requests like budget-friendly tech, maintaining performance across global users. OpenAI's investment in scalable systems enables ChatGPT Search to support its growing user base, ensuring reliability for time-sensitive retail tasks.

COMPETITIVE RETAIL ENVIRONMENT

ChatGPT Search competes with platforms like Amazon, which uses AI for product recommendations, and Klarna, whose AI assistant targets budget-conscious shoppers. Retailers like Zalando have adopted conversational AI to enhance search, reflecting a trend toward personalized retail experiences.

ChatGPT's ad-free, conversational model focuses on user needs, distinguishing it from ad-heavy competitors.

The platform's ability to process queries like "find a durable laptop bag" with tailored results challenges traditional search engines.



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ALIBABA UNVEILS QWEN 3 AI TO COMPETE IN CHINA'S TECH RACE

Alibaba Group has released Qwen 3, an upgraded version of its flagship artificial intelligence model, this week, featuring advanced capabilities to bolster its standing in China's competitive AI landscape. The launch counters the rapid advancements of rivals like DeepSeek, which debuted cost-efficient models in January, and Baidu, which introduced its Ernie 4.5 Turbo and Ernie X1 Turbo models. For developers, businesses, and industry analysts, Qwen 3's debut highlights Alibaba's drive to deliver powerful AI tools for applications in healthcare, entertainment, and customer service.

Alibaba

Qwen 3 comprises eight models, ranging from 0.6 billion to 235 billion parameters, trained on a dataset of over 36 trillion tokens, including textbooks and code snippets. Available under an open-source license on platforms like Hugging Face, it supports 119 languages and processes text, images, audio, and video inputs. The model's hybrid reasoning toggles between quick responses and detailed problem-solving, positioning Qwen 3 as a versatile solution for diverse use cases.

QWEN 3'S MODEL FAMILY AND TRAINING DATA

Qwen 3 includes eight models, from the lightweight Qwen3-0.6B to the robust Qwen3-235B-A22B, trained on a dataset exceeding 36 trillion tokens. This dataset, comprising textbooks, code snippets, and question-answer pairs, enables the models to handle tasks like programming and multilingual content creation. The training process enhances the models' ability to process varied data types, ensuring flexibility for developers.

The models vary in size to suit different computational needs, with smaller versions like Qwen3-0.6B running on mobile devices and larger ones like Qwen3-235B-A22B designed for high-performance servers. Alibaba's focus on comprehensive training data supports Qwen 3's adaptability across industries.

HYBRID REASONING FOR TASK EFFICIENCY

Qwen 3 features hybrid reasoning, allowing it to switch between a fast-response mode for simple queries and a reasoning mode for complex

ba.com
Qwen

tasks, such as solving math problems or writing code. This capability enables developers to configure the model for specific applications, balancing speed and accuracy. The model's self-fact-checking reduces errors, ensuring reliable outputs.

The Qwen3-235B-A22B model excels in benchmarks like Codeforces for programming and AIME for math, outperforming OpenAI's o3-mini in coding contests, according to Alibaba's internal tests. This reasoning strength supports precision-driven tasks in software development and data analysis.

MULTIMODAL INPUT PROCESSING

Qwen 3 processes text, images, audio, and video inputs, enabling tasks like generating visual content or analyzing multimedia data. Its support for 119 languages allows for applications in global markets, such as multilingual chatbots or content localization. The model's ability to handle diverse inputs makes it suitable for industries requiring integrated data processing, like healthcare diagnostics or entertainment media.

The multimodal functionality builds on Alibaba's prior Qwen-VL model, with enhanced processing for real-time applications, ensuring accurate handling of varied user inputs across different formats.

OPEN-SOURCE ACCESS ON HUGGING FACE

Alibaba has made Qwen 3 available under an open-source license on Hugging Face and GitHub, with the Qwen3-32B model currently

deepseek

accessible and the Qwen3-235B-A22B slated for release. The platform has seen over 300 million downloads of prior Qwen models, with 100,000 derivative models created. Cloud providers like Fireworks AI offer Qwen 3 for developers to integrate into applications without local infrastructure.

The Qwen3-32B model outperforms DeepSeek's R1 on coding benchmarks like LiveCodeBench, providing a robust tool for app development across various sectors.

COMPETITIVE PRESSURE FROM DEEPSEEK AND BAIDU

DeepSeek's cost-efficient models, launched in January 2025, prompted Alibaba to release Qwen 2.5-Max days later, claiming superior performance. Baidu's Ernie 4.5 Turbo and Ernie X1 Turbo, introduced concurrently, focus on advanced reasoning. Qwen 3 responds with its hybrid reasoning and multimodal capabilities, matching OpenAI's o3-mini on the BFCL reasoning test and surpassing o1 on coding tasks, per Alibaba's benchmarks.

The competition has accelerated innovation, with Chinese startups like DeepSeek securing new funding to challenge Alibaba and Baidu in delivering high-performance AI solutions.

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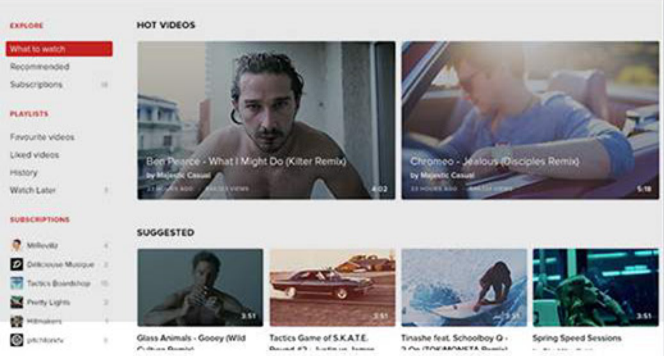

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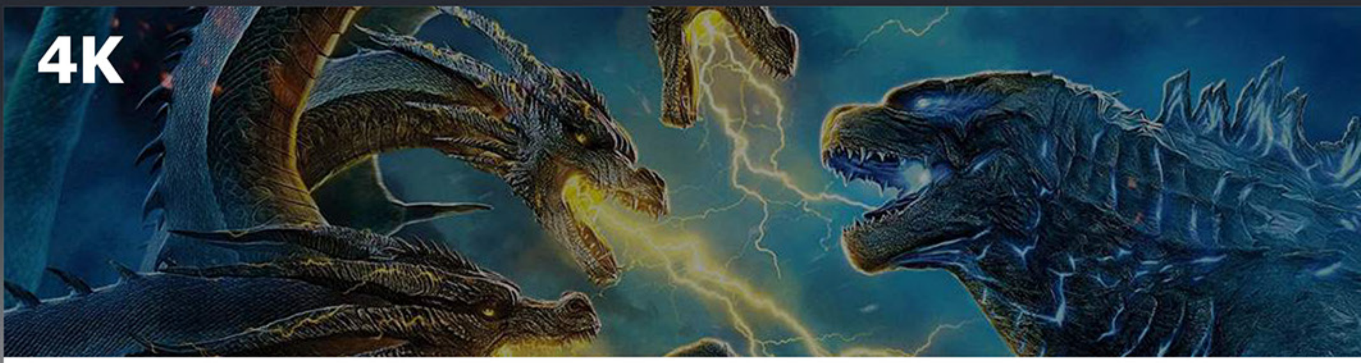

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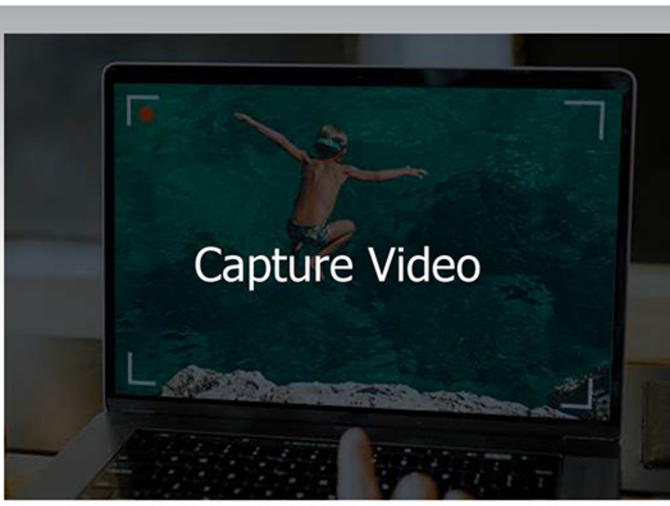

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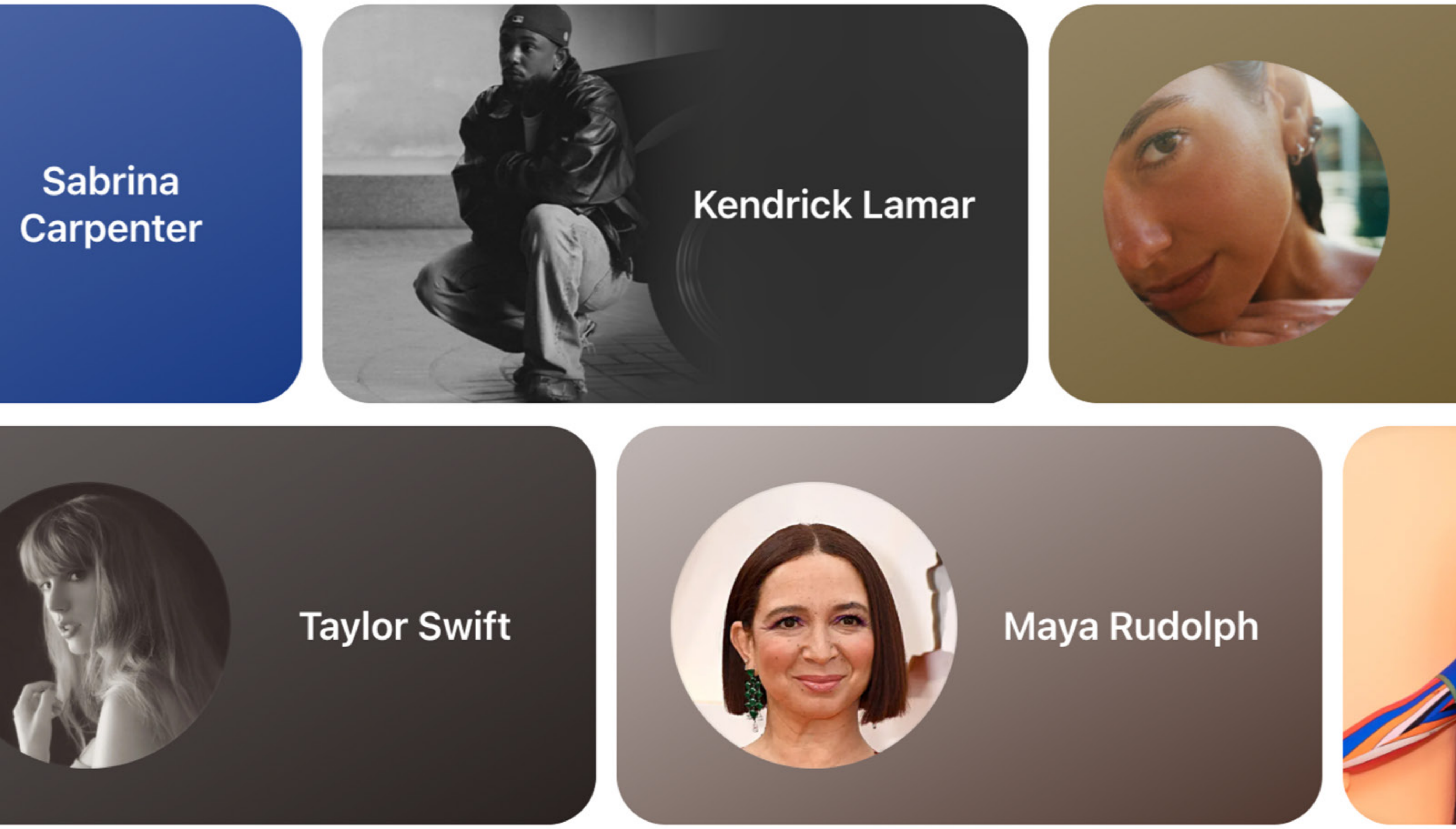
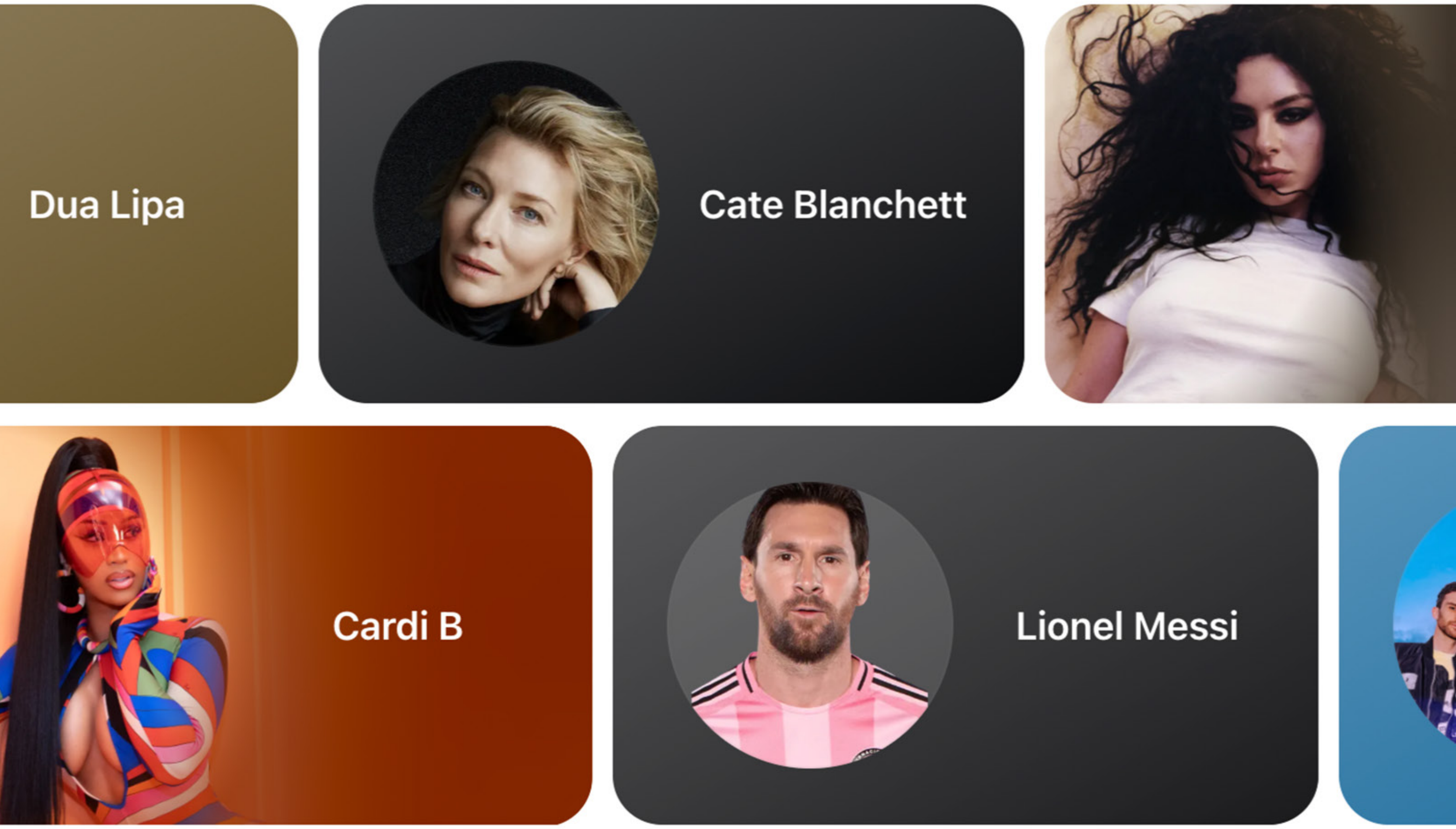
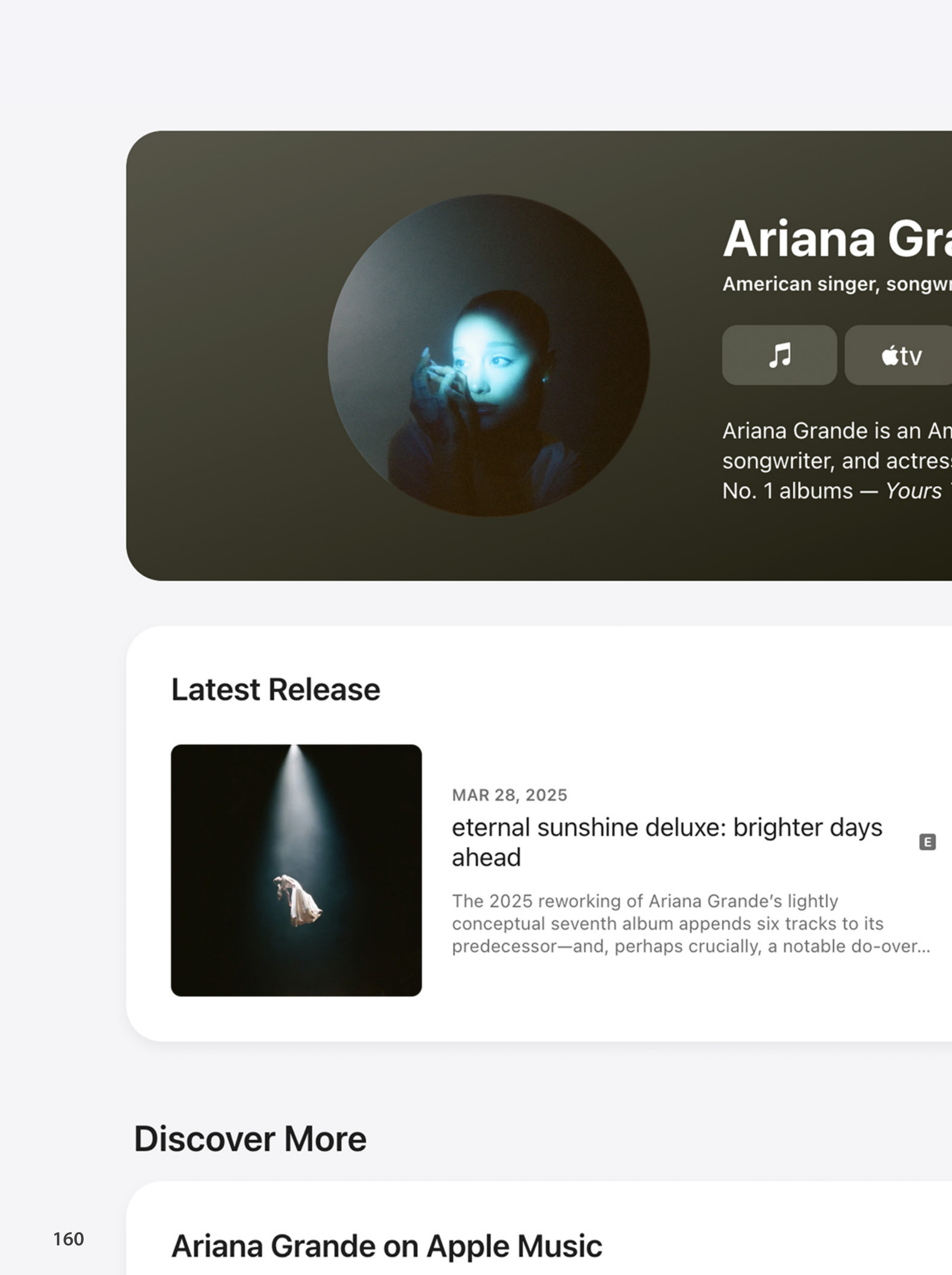

Sabrina Carpenter
Kendrick Lamar
Taylor Swift
Maya Rudolph

APPLE INTRODUCES SNAPSHOT TO HIGHLIGHT ARTISTS, ACTORS, AND ATHLETES


Dua Lipa
Cate Blanchett
Cardi B
Lionel Messi



Ariana Gr

American singer, songw

Ariana Grande is an An
songwriter, and actres
No. 1 albums — *Yours*

Latest Release

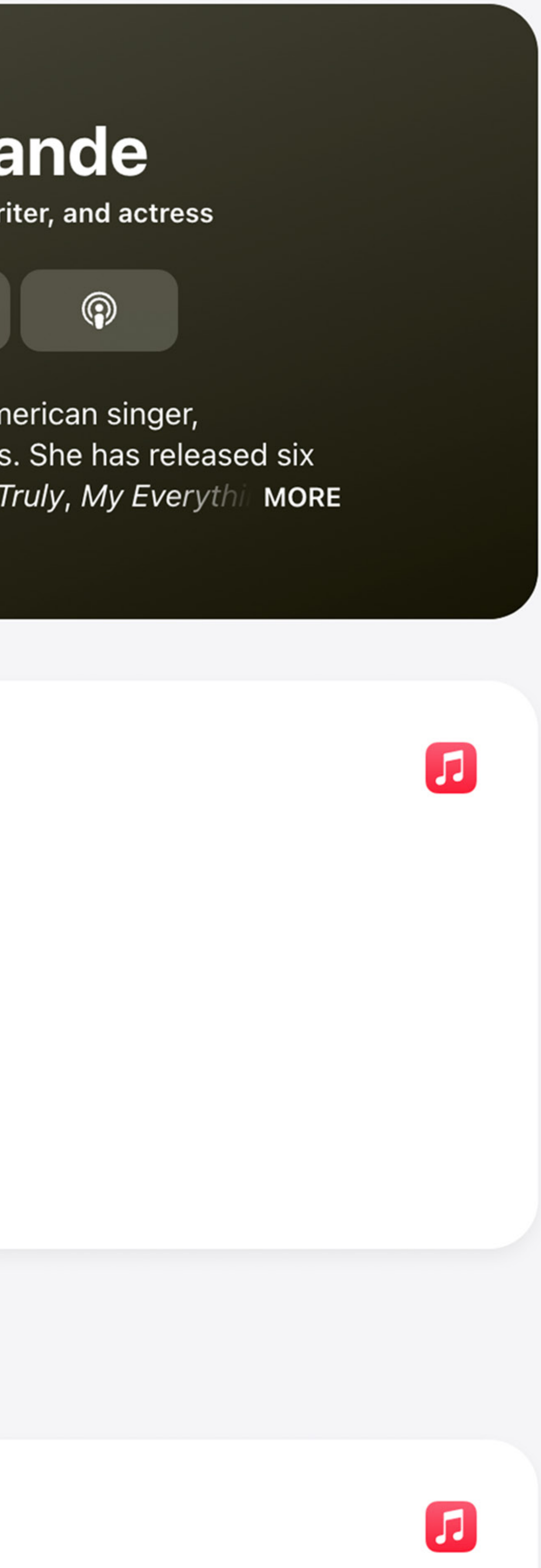
MAR 28, 2025

eternal sunshine deluxe: brighter days ahead

The 2025 reworking of Ariana Grande's lightly conceptual seventh album appends six tracks to its predecessor—and, perhaps crucially, a notable do-over…

Discover More

Ariana Grande on Apple Music



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Truly, My Everythi **MORE**

Apple has launched Snapshot, a new webpage designed to help users explore the work of popular artists, actors, and athletes across its media platforms, as announced this week.

Accessible at **snapshot.apple.com,** Snapshot features a scrolling carousel showcasing 36 celebrities, including Billie Eilish, Brxad Pitt, and Lionel Messi, with links to their content on Apple Music, Apple TV, and Apple Podcasts.

For music fans, movie enthusiasts, and sports followers, the tool provides a centralized hub to discover content from their favorite personalities within Apple's ecosystem.

Each celebrity profile includes a brief biography, birth year, place of origin, and a curated selection of their music, films, shows, or podcast appearances.

For example, Kendrick Lamar's page highlights his albums on Apple Music, while Serena Williams' profile links to her Apple TV documentary and podcast interviews. The webpage, lacking a search function or manual scroll option, relies on a slow, automatic carousel, limiting navigation to the featured 36 profiles.

Apple's Snapshot aims to streamline content discovery, leveraging its media services to connect users with celebrity-driven entertainment.

SNAPSHOT WEBPAGE DESIGN AND ACCESS

Snapshot, located at **snapshot.apple.com**, presents two rows of celebrity headshots in a horizontally scrolling carousel that moves slowly without manual navigation options. Users can pause the scroll but cannot swipe or search for specific names, restricting access to the 36 featured profiles.

Clicking a celebrity's image or name opens a dedicated page with their content and details, accessible to anyone without requiring an Apple account.

The webpage integrates content from Apple Music, Apple TV, and Apple Podcasts, offering a unified view of a celebrity's work across these platforms.

CELEBRITY PROFILES AND CONTENT HUBS

Each of the 36 Snapshot profiles includes a brief biography, listing the celebrity's birth year, place of origin, and career highlights.

For instance, Taylor Swift's page details her music catalog on Apple Music, while Matt Damon's profile links to his films on Apple TV.

Athletes like Stephen Curry have pages showcasing game highlights and podcast appearances, such as interviews on sports-related shows.

The profiles serve as content hubs, aggregating media like albums, documentaries, and episodes. Billie Eilish's page, for example, features her 2021 Apple TV documentary and podcast guest spots, alongside her Apple Music playlists.

INTEGRATION WITH APPLE'S MEDIA PLATFORMS

Snapshot connects directly to Apple Music, Apple TV, and Apple Podcasts, linking to content available on these platforms. Users can access songs, movies, or episodes through embedded

links, such as Ariana Grande's albums or Jennifer Aniston's shows like "The Morning Show." The tool does not introduce new content but organizes existing media, making it easier to find celebrity-related material.

The webpage supports Apple's broader media ecosystem, where Apple Music hosts millions of songs, Apple TV offers original programming, and Apple Podcasts provides thousands of episodes.

LIMITATIONS OF THE SNAPSHOT TOOL

The absence of a search function restricts Snapshot to the 36 pre-selected celebrities, including Coldplay, BTS, and athletes like Shohei Ohtani. The slow-scrolling carousel, with no option to manually navigate or filter by category, limits usability, as users must wait for desired profiles to appear. This design choice contrasts with Apple's typically intuitive interfaces, as noted in industry reports.

The tool's curated nature excludes less prominent figures, and its lack of interactivity, such as sorting by genre or platform, may hinder broader adoption. Apple has not indicated plans for a dedicated Snapshot app or additional features like search capabilities.

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COMPETITIVE CONTEXT IN CONTENT DISCOVERY

Apple's Snapshot follows its earlier attempts to spotlight celebrities, such as the failed Ping service in 2010 and the successful Apple Music Best 100 Albums list. The tool competes with platforms offering similar discovery features, like Spotify's artist hubs or IMDb's actor profiles, which provide more robust search and filtering options. Snapshot's focus on Apple's ecosystem limits its scope to content available on Music, TV, and Podcasts, unlike broader platforms.

The launch aligns with Apple's strategy to enhance user engagement, as seen in recent updates like iOS 18.4's Visual Intelligence. However, Snapshot's limited functionality suggests it may serve as a test for future media discovery tools.

ALABAMA SUES TIKTOK AND BYTEDANCE OVER DECEPTIVE YOUTH SAFETY CLAIMS

TikT

Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall announced a lawsuit against TikTok Inc. and its parent company, ByteDance Inc., this week, accusing them of misleading parents about the platform's safety for children and exploiting young users with harmful content.

Filed in Montgomery County Circuit Court, the complaint seeks to hold TikTok accountable for fueling a mental health crisis among Alabama's youth, alleging violations of the state's Deceptive Trade Practices Act. For parents, youth advocates, and social media regulators, the lawsuit highlights concerns about TikTok's impact on minors and its data practices, intensifying scrutiny of the Chinese-owned platform.

The suit claims TikTok's algorithm is designed to addict children, exposing them to content promoting depression, eating disorders, self-harm, drug use, and dangerous viral challenges, while its safety features, like Kids Mode and Restricted Mode, are ineffective and easily bypassed.

Marshall alleges that over one-third of TikTok's daily U.S. users are 14 or younger, a result of deliberate targeting, with ByteDance collecting sensitive user data that may be shared with Chinese intelligence services.

The state seeks civil penalties, compensatory and punitive damages, and an injunction to stop TikTok's deceptive practices.

LAWSUIT ALLEGATIONS AGAINST TIKTOK

The Alabama lawsuit accuses TikTok of deceptive claims about platform safety, asserting that its algorithm encourages endless scrolling among minors, exposing them to harmful content.

The complaint details how videos promoting mental health issues, substance abuse, and risky challenges are readily accessible, contributing to a youth mental health crisis. Marshall claims TikTok's safety measures, such as Kids Mode, fail to block inappropriate material, with restrictions easily circumvented by young users.

The suit emphasizes that TikTok's design prioritizes user engagement over safety, targeting children to boost ad revenue. It seeks to enforce transparency and accountability under Alabama's consumer protection laws, demanding an end to misleading safety assurances.

BYTEDANCE'S DATA PRACTICES UNDER SCRUTINY

TikTok, owned by Chinese corporation ByteDance, faces allegations of collecting extensive user data, including personal information and behavioral patterns, which may be shared with Chinese national intelligence services due to legal obligations in China. The lawsuit cites a 2024 U.S. Department of Justice and Federal Trade Commission case against ByteDance for violating children's privacy laws, reinforcing claims of data misuse. Marshall argues this data collection constitutes espionage against Americans, particularly targeting vulnerable youth.

The complaint highlights ByteDance's focus on maximizing data extraction since TikTok's inception, exploiting its young user base for profit and potential foreign intelligence purposes.

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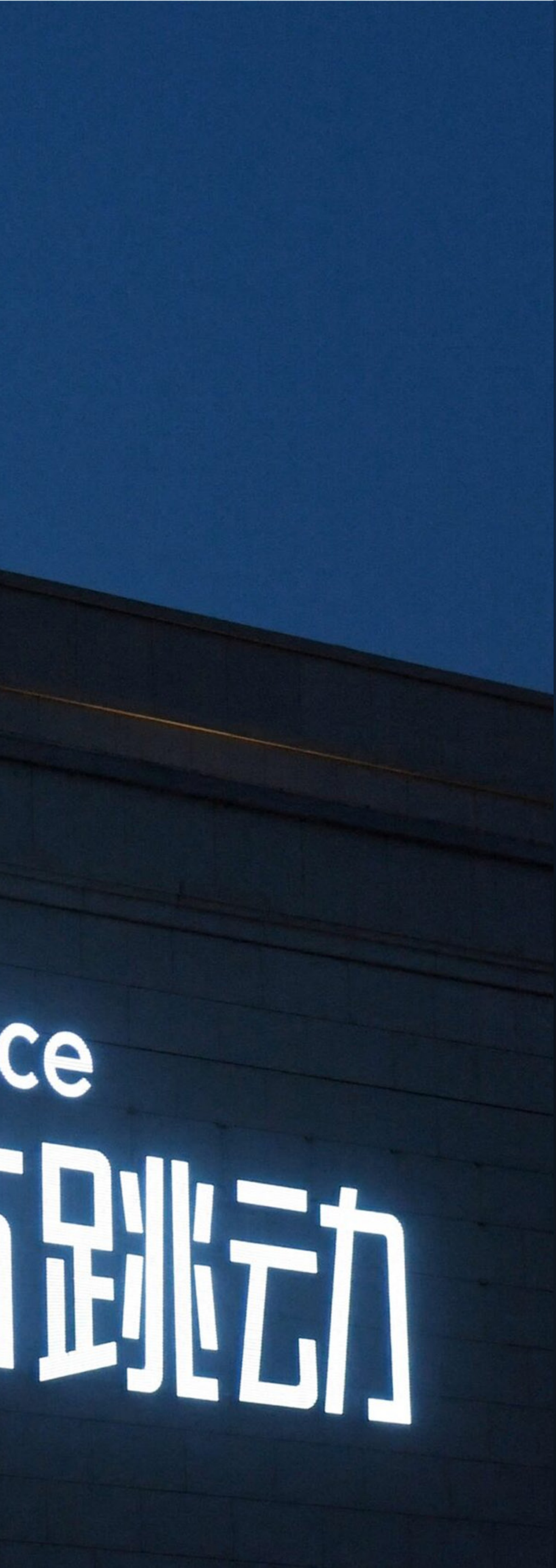


IMPACT ON ALABAMA'S YOUTH

The lawsuit claims TikTok's addictive design has driven a mental health crisis among Alabama's youth, with over one-third of its daily U.S. users aged 14 or younger. The platform's algorithm allegedly steers minors toward content that exacerbates issues like anxiety, body dysmorphia, and self-harm, based on their viewing habits.

Marshall asserts that TikTok's targeting of young users is a calculated campaign, not an accident, prioritizing engagement over well-being.

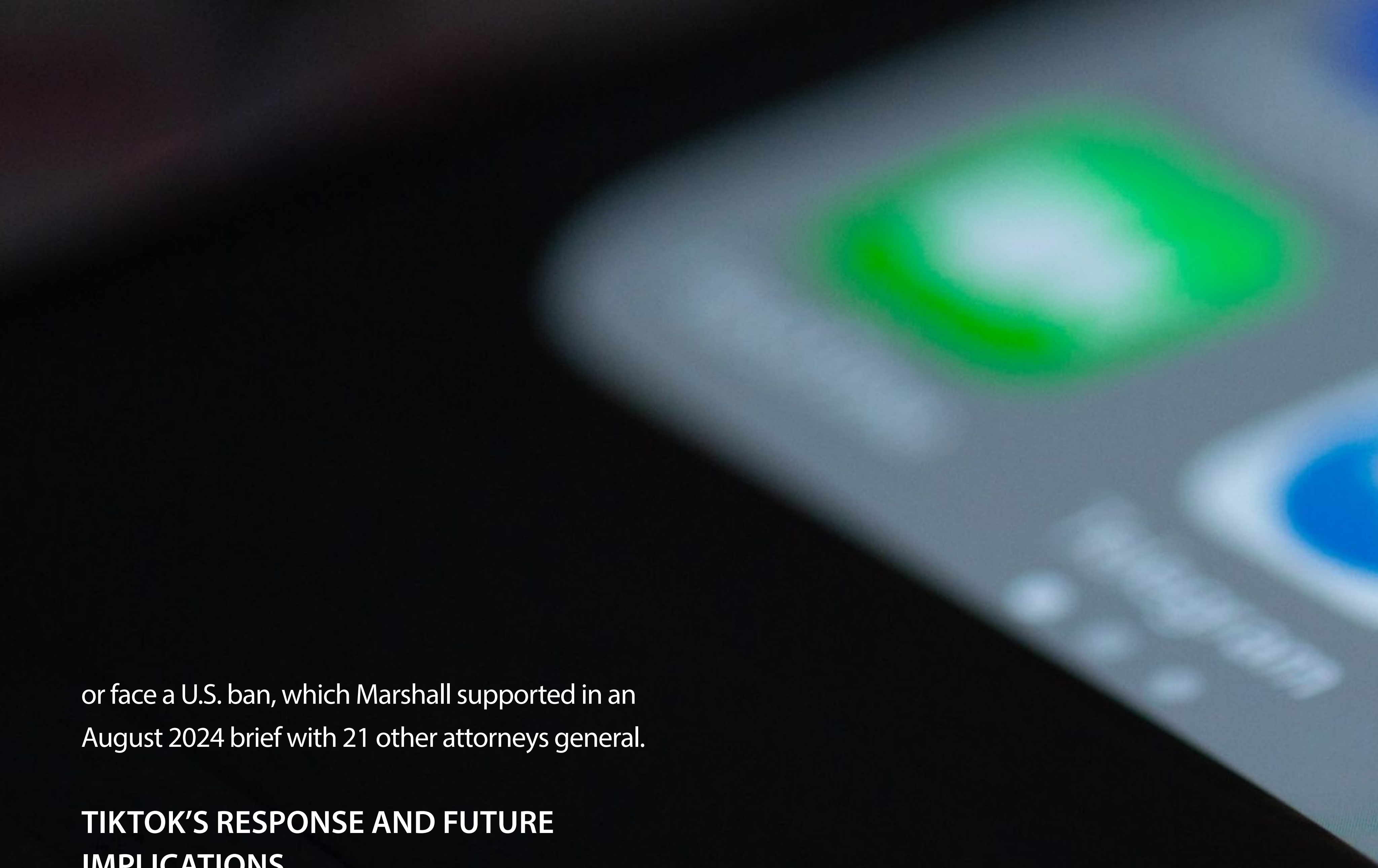
The state seeks compensatory damages to address the harm caused to Alabama's youth, emphasizing the need for stronger protections against exploitative content and deceptive safety claims.

LEGAL AND REGULATORY CONTEXT

Filed under Alabama's Deceptive Trade Practices Act, the lawsuit demands civil penalties, punitive damages, and an injunction to halt TikTok's misleading practices. It follows a 2024 federal lawsuit by the Justice Department and FTC against TikTok and ByteDance for violating the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, which found the platform collected data from children under 13 without parental consent.

Alabama's action aligns with similar lawsuits by 14 other states and the District of Columbia in October 2024, targeting TikTok's role in youth mental health issues.

The case reflects growing regulatory pressure on TikTok, including a 2024 federal law requiring ByteDance to divest TikTok by January 19, 2025,



or face a U.S. ban, which Marshall supported in an August 2024 brief with 21 other attorneys general.

TIKTOK'S RESPONSE AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

TikTok expressed disappointment with Alabama's lawsuit, noting ongoing efforts to address safety concerns with state attorneys general over two years. The company defends its safety features, including age verification and content moderation, but has not detailed specific changes in response to the suit.

The lawsuit seeks to force TikTok to overhaul its algorithm and safety measures to better protect minors, potentially setting a precedent for other states.

The legal action coincides with broader challenges for TikTok, including a U.S. Supreme Court hearing on its potential ban, pitting national security concerns against free speech rights. Alabama's case could influence future regulations on social media platforms targeting youth.

TikTok
Messenger

Image: Logan Gutier

SECONDHAND SMARTPHONES GAIN POPULARITY AS PRICES SOAR

The market for secondhand smartphones is experiencing a surge in demand as new device prices climb, driven by global supply chain challenges, according to a recent report from CCS Insight, a U.K.-based tech research firm. This week's analysis highlights the growing appeal of used iPhones and Android devices, which offer significant savings—15 to 50% less than new models—along with warranties and financing options. For budget-conscious consumers, retailers, and tech enthusiasts, this trend reflects a shift toward cost-effective alternatives in a market where new flagship phones, like the iPhone Pro Max, could see prices rise 29% from $1,200 to $1,550, per a UBS estimate.

Apple dominates the secondhand market, holding a 60% global share, followed by Samsung at 17%, with smaller Chinese brands like Xiaomi filling the remainder. Platforms like Gazelle, Backmarket, and even Apple and Samsung's own websites offer refurbished devices, tested and repaired to ensure reliability. However, buying used phones from individual sellers on sites like Facebook Marketplace carries risks, as these often lack guarantees. Consumers are advised to check for trusted sellers, verify device condition, and ensure accessories like charging cables are included, as these may not be provided.

Image: Onur Binay

The secondhand boom, outpacing new phone sales, is reshaping retail strategies, with companies like CompAsia in the Philippines offering 32-step quality checks and up to 12 months of warranty. As new phone costs escalate and trade disruptions loom, the secondhand market provides a practical solution, balancing affordability with quality for millions seeking modern smartphones without the premium price tag.

APPLE AND SAMSUNG LEAD SECONDHAND MARKET

Apple's iPhones account for 60% of the global secondhand smartphone market, driven by their durability and strong resale value. A flagship iPhone purchased for $1,200 can often be resold for over half its original cost after two years, according to posts found on X. Samsung's Android devices hold a 17% share, with brands like Xiaomi comprising the rest. This dominance stems from the reliability and brand recognition of these devices, making them top choices for used phone buyers.

Refurbished iPhones and Samsung phones are available through platforms like Gazelle and Backmarket, which provide warranties and financing options. Apple and Samsung also sell refurbished models directly on their websites, restored by in-house technicians for guaranteed reliability, though discounts are less substantial, and selection is limited—Apple currently lists only iPhone 13 and 14 models.

These options ensure buyers receive tested devices with replaced components, unlike used phones from individual sellers, which may lack repairs or guarantees.

COST SAVINGS DRIVE SECONDHAND DEMAND

Secondhand smartphones offer savings of 15 to 50% compared to new models, per CCS Insight's report. With new flagship prices rising—a top-tier iPhone Pro Max could hit $1,550, a 29% increase from $1,200, per UBS—budget-conscious buyers are turning to used devices. Refurbished phones come with warranties, flexible financing, and after-sales service, making them a compelling alternative to new purchases.

The market for used phones is growing faster than for new devices, fueled by consumers trading in or selling older models during annual upgrades. These devices, often in good condition, enter the secondhand market, providing affordable options for buyers. Platforms like CompAsia in the Philippines perform 32-step quality checks and offer up to 12 months of warranty, enhancing buyer confidence.

In contrast, new phone prices are climbing due to supply chain constraints, pushing more consumers toward cost-effective used models.

RISKS AND PRECAUTIONS FOR BUYERS

Buying secondhand smartphones involves risks, particularly from individual sellers on platforms like Facebook Marketplace, where devices are often sold as-is without repairs or guarantees. CCS Insight's Simon Bryant noted that these used phones can offer the lowest prices but require buyers to accept potential defects. Scammers are prevalent, and deals that seem too good to be true often are, necessitating caution when selecting sellers.

Consumers should verify seller trustworthiness by checking reviews and seeking guarantees, such as warranties or return policies, available on platforms like Gazelle and Backmarket. For in-person purchases, buyers can inspect devices for liquid exposure using Apple's liquid contact indicator guide for iPhones since 2006 or Samsung's equivalent for Android devices. Accessories like charging cables or earphones may not be included, requiring additional budgeting.

These precautions help mitigate the uncertainties of secondhand purchases, ensuring buyers secure reliable devices from reputable sources while avoiding common pitfalls.

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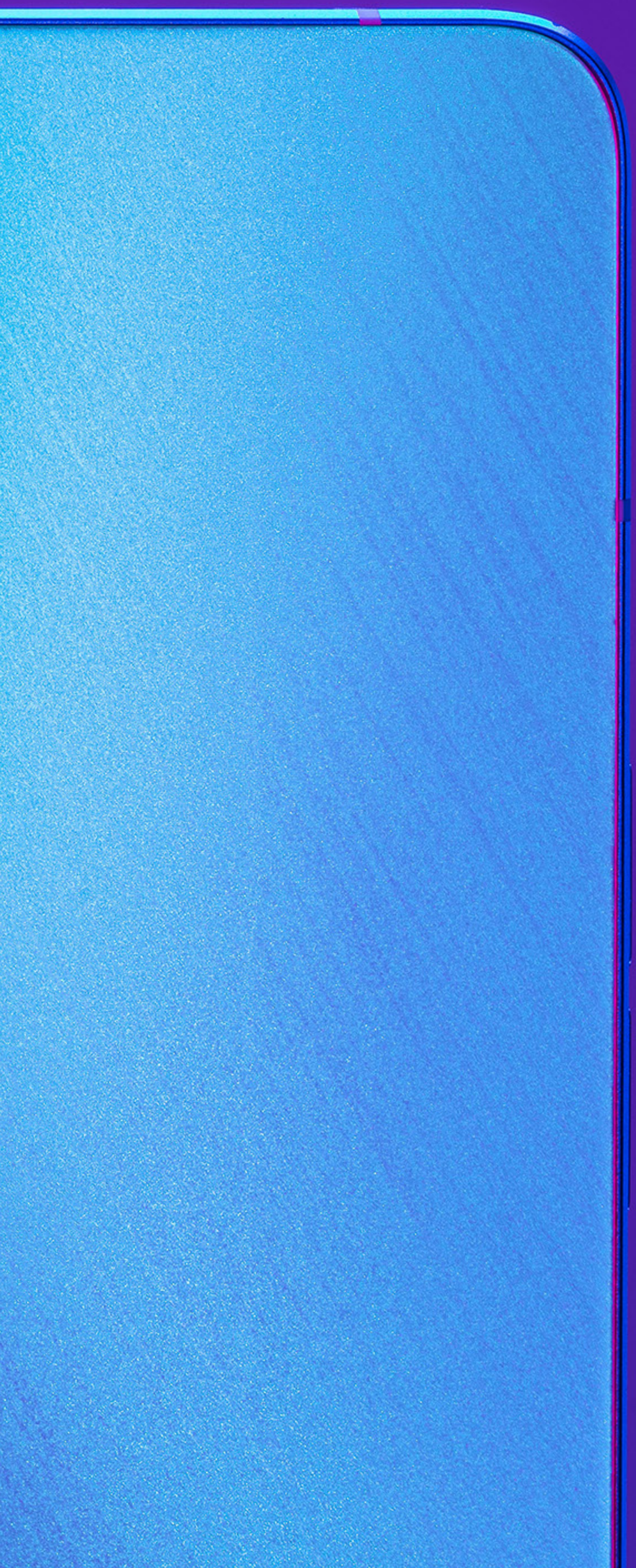


REFURBISHED VS. USED PHONE OPTIONS

Refurbished smartphones, tested and repaired with defective components replaced, offer greater reliability than used phones sold by individuals. Retailers like Apple and Samsung provide refurbished iPhones and Galaxy devices, restored by technicians to ensure functionality, though their discounts are smaller, and selection is limited—Apple's site currently offers only iPhone 13 and 14 models. Third-party platforms like Backmarket conduct 25-point inspections, providing a 1-year warranty and 30-day money-back guarantee.

Used phones, available through online classifieds, are typically cheaper but lack warranties or repairs, increasing the risk of issues like battery degradation or software glitches. Buyers must weigh the lower cost against the potential for unaddressed defects, as these devices are sold in their current condition.

The distinction between refurbished and used options allows consumers to choose based on their risk tolerance and budget, with refurbished phones offering a safer, albeit pricier, alternative.

GROWING MARKET DYNAMICS

The secondhand smartphone market is expanding rapidly, outpacing new device sales, according to CCS Insight. This growth is driven by consumers upgrading annually, selling or trading in devices with significant remaining lifespan. The market's appeal is evident in its diversity, with iPhones holding a 60% global share and Samsung devices at 17%, while platforms like CompAsia and Sahivalue in India offer financing and no-cost EMI to attract buyers.

Specialized retailers like Gazelle and Backmarket provide trusted options, contrasting with riskier individual sales on platforms like Facebook Marketplace.

The trend is reshaping retail, as companies enhance warranties and quality checks to meet demand for affordable, reliable smartphones, particularly as new device prices rise.

Image: Jonas Leupe

IPHONE 18 MEMORY UPGRADE TO ENHANCE APPLE INTELLIGENCE

Apple plans to introduce a significant memory bandwidth upgrade for the iPhone 18 series, set for release in 2026, incorporating 6-channel LPDDR5X memory to improve performance for Apple Intelligence features, according to a supply chain leak reported this week. The enhancement will support the increasing computational demands of AI-driven tasks, such as on-device processing for Siri and generative AI applications.

For iPhone users, app developers, and industry analysts, this development highlights Apple's efforts to optimize its AI capabilities.

The 6-channel LPDDR5X memory will increase data transfer speeds between the CPU and memory, paired with the anticipated A20 chip using a 2-nanometer process.

Apple's collaboration with Samsung on advanced RAM packaging ensures compatibility with these AI demands. The upgrade addresses the growing storage and performance requirements of Apple Intelligence, positioning the iPhone 18 to handle complex tasks efficiently.

ADVANCED LPDDR5X MEMORY CONFIGURATION

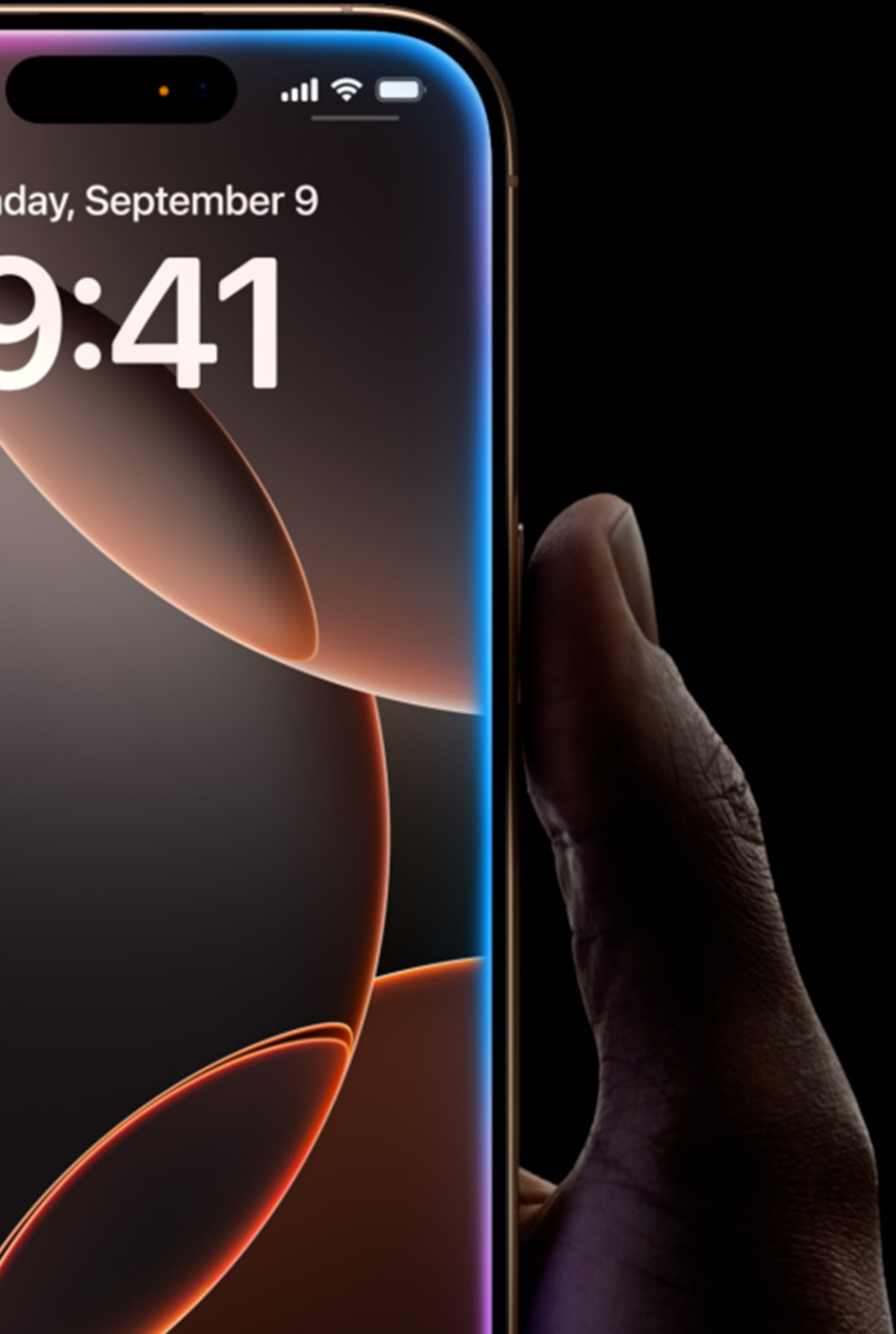
The iPhone 18 series will feature 6-channel LPDDR5X memory, an upgrade from the LPDDR5 memory in current models, as revealed by a supply chain leak from Weibo's Digital Chat Station. This configuration uses six independent data pathways to boost bandwidth, enabling faster data transfers compared to the dual-channel setups in existing iPhones.

The memory supports high-speed operations with improved power efficiency.

Apple's adoption of LPDDR5X, sourced from Samsung, focuses on enhancing the iPhone's ability to manage resource-intensive tasks. The technology reduces energy consumption while maintaining reliability, ensuring efficient performance for applications requiring rapid data access.

SUPPORT FOR AI-DRIVEN TASKS

The memory bandwidth increase will enhance Apple Intelligence features, such as Writing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Tools, Genmoji, and Image Playground, which rely on on-device processing for user privacy.

The 6-channel LPDDR5X memory will accelerate data access for the A20 chip, expected to debut in 2026, improving response times for Siri queries and multitasking.

The iPhone 16's 8GB of RAM supports current Apple Intelligence functions, while the iPhone 17 series is expected to offer 12GB. The iPhone 18's upgrade will further address the 7GB storage requirement for iOS 18.2's AI features, enabling faster execution of tasks like text generation and photo editing.

SAMSUNG COLLABORATION ON RAM PACKAGING

Apple is partnering with Samsung to implement the 6-channel LPDDR5X memory, utilizing a Wafer-Level Multi-Chip Module for advanced RAM packaging. This collaboration, started in December 2024, optimizes memory configurations to support the iPhone 18's AI performance. Samsung, a key RAM supplier for Apple, previously provided LPDDR5 for the iPhone 16 series.

The packaging technique allows flexible integration of CPU, GPU, and memory dies, maintaining a consistent CPU across the iPhone 18 lineup while varying memory setups.

COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE

Chinese smartphone makers, such as Huawei with the Pura 70 Ultra and OnePlus with the Ace 2 Pro, have adopted 6-channel LPDDR5X memory to enhance AI and multitasking. Apple's iPhone 18 upgrade aligns with these advancements, addressing performance gaps in AI capabilities.

Competitors like Samsung, using Google's Gemini AI, offer robust AI features, prompting Apple to improve its hardware.

The iPhone 18's memory boost will support iOS 18.4 features like Visual Intelligence and ChatGPT-powered Siri, requiring advanced hardware to compete with rivals' AI-driven devices.

STORAGE AND PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS

Apple Intelligence's storage needs have grown, with iOS 18.2 requiring 7GB per device, up from 4GB in iOS 18.1, for features like Genmoji and Image Playground.

The iPhone 18's 6-channel LPDDR5X memory will accommodate these demands, reducing reliance on cloud processing. The A20 chip's 2-nanometer process will further enhance efficiency, supporting local execution of complex AI tasks.

The memory upgrade ensures the iPhone 18 can manage increased storage and computational requirements, maintaining performance for AI-driven applications without compromising user privacy.

ne 18 is expected to launch the world's first 2nm chip

AMAZON LAUNCHES FIRST PROJECT KUIPER SATELLITES TO RIVAL SPACEX'S STARLINK

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Amazon successfully deployed its first 27 Project Kuiper internet satellites into low Earth orbit this week, marking the initial step in building a broadband network to compete with SpaceX's Starlink, according to a report from Cape Canaveral, Florida. Launched aboard a United Launch Alliance Atlas V rocket from the Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, the satellites were released at an altitude of 280 miles and are designed to ascend to 392 miles for operational use. For global consumers, businesses, and tech industry observers, this milestone signals Amazon's entry into the satellite internet market, aiming to provide high-speed connectivity to underserved regions.

Project Kuiper, a $10 billion initiative, plans to deploy 3,236 satellites to deliver broadband speeds up to 400 megabits per second, with some organizations accessing up to 1,000 megabits per second. The Federal Communications Commission requires Amazon to launch half of these satellites, 1,618, by July 2026, a deadline complicated by production delays and a scrubbed launch attempt on April 9 due to weather. Amazon has secured 83 launches with ULA, Arianespace, Blue Origin, and SpaceX, but faces challenges catching up to Starlink's 8,000 satellites and 5 million customers. The company expects to begin customer service later this year, leveraging its cloud computing expertise to target consumers, enterprises, and governments.

INITIAL SATELLITE DEPLOYMENT

The Atlas V rocket, carrying 27 Project Kuiper satellites, lifted off at 7:01 p.m. EDT from Cape Canaveral, deploying the satellites into an initial

amazon
ATLAS
ULA

280-mile orbit. The mission, named Kuiper Atlas 1, marks Amazon's first operational launch following two prototype satellites sent up in October 2023. The satellites will use electric propulsion to reach their final orbit at 392 miles, as confirmed by ULA's mission control.

Amazon's team in Redmond, Washington, established contact with all 27 satellites post-launch, with initial deployment sequences proceeding as planned. The company aims to begin customer pilots by mid-2025, pending successful satellite activation and testing.

PROJECT KUIPER'S AMBITIOUS GOALS

Project Kuiper targets a constellation of 3,236 satellites to provide broadband internet globally, with speeds of 400 megabits per second for consumers and up to 1,000 megabits per second for organizations. The FCC mandates that 1,618 satellites be operational by July 2026, with the full network completed by July 2029. Amazon's $10 billion investment covers satellite production, ground stations, and user terminals, with plans to offer service starting at 578 satellites.

The satellites feature optical inter-satellite laser links, tested successfully in 2023, enabling data transfer at 100 gigabits per second. This technology supports low-latency connections, critical for competing with Starlink's established network.

LAUNCH CONTRACTS AND PRODUCTION CHALLENGES

Amazon has secured 83 launches to deploy its constellation, including eight remaining Atlas

ULA

V missions, 38 on ULA's Vulcan Centaur, 18 on Arianespace's Ariane 6, 12 to 27 on Blue Origin's New Glenn, and three on SpaceX's Falcon 9. ULA's CEO, Tory Bruno, indicated up to five more Kuiper launches could occur this year, with Vulcan missions planned after resolving a solid rocket booster issue.

Production delays have hindered Amazon's progress, with only a few dozen satellites completed, far short of the 1,618 needed by July 2026. The company may seek an FCC extension, as noted by industry sources, to meet its deployment timeline.

COMPETITION WITH STARLINK

SpaceX's Starlink, with over 8,000 satellites and 5 million customers across 125 countries, dominates the low Earth orbit internet market. Starlink's weekly launches, carrying dozens of satellites, have built a network serving homes, businesses, and government agencies, with U.S. residential plans costing $80 to $120 monthly and a $349 dish. Amazon's Kuiper, aiming to serve similar markets, plans to produce user terminals under $400, with designs ranging from Kindle-sized to LP vinyl-sized antennas.

Amazon's cloud computing expertise, through Amazon Web Services, could provide an edge by bundling Kuiper with data services, unlike Starlink's standalone model. Recent contracts in the U.K., Australia, and Indonesia reflect growing interest in Kuiper's offerings.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND FUTURE DEPLOYMENTS

Amazon’s satellite integration facility at Cape Canaveral and mission operations center in Redmond support the Kuiper network’s rollout. The company has invested $19.5 million to expand operations at Florida’s Kennedy Space Center, totaling nearly $140 million. ULA will manage seven more Atlas V launches and 38 Vulcan Centaur missions, with additional launches from Arianespace, Blue Origin, and SpaceX.

The KA-02 mission, also using an Atlas V, is next, with satellites already in processing. Amazon’s ability to scale production and meet FCC deadlines will determine its success in challenging Starlink’s market dominance.

APPLE SUPPLIER WARNS OF EMPTY SHELVES IN U.S. DUE TO TARIFF UNCERTAINTY

Pegatron, a major supplier to Apple, has warned that U.S. stores could face empty shelves within two months due to uncertainty surrounding tariffs imposed by the Trump administration, according to a statement reported this week. Pegatron's chairman, T.H. Tung, highlighted the chaotic impact of fluctuating trade policies, which have disrupted supply chain decisions for retailers and manufacturers.

For U.S. consumers, retailers, and the tech industry, this warning signals potential shortages of consumer electronics, including Apple products like iPhones, MacBooks, iPads, and Apple Watches, as companies adopt a cautious wait-and-see approach.

OOSE
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PEGAT
和碩聯

The Trump administration's tariffs, initially set at 145% on Chinese goods and later paused for some countries like Vietnam, Indonesia, and India, have created confusion, with a 10% levy remaining on nearly all U.S. imports. Pegatron, Taiwan's second-largest Apple assembler after Foxconn, noted that U.S. importers are hesitant to ramp up shipments during the pause, fearing the 10% tariff might be repealed or altered.

Apple secured a temporary exemption for its products, but the ongoing unpredictability has led Pegatron to maintain its production plans without immediate adjustments, potentially exacerbating supply constraints.

The warning follows a $700 billion drop in Apple's market value amid tariff concerns, with Pegatron's statement reflecting broader industry fears of disrupted logistics. As retailers like Best Buy and Walmart stockpile inventory to hedge against shortages, the risk of bare shelves looms, particularly for electronics reliant on global supply chains.

TARIFFS DISRUPT SUPPLY CHAIN PLANNING

The Trump administration's tariffs, starting at 10% and escalating to 145% on Chinese imports, have sown confusion among U.S. retailers and suppliers, per Pegatron's chairman, T.H. Tung.

A temporary pause on tariffs for countries like Vietnam, Indonesia, and India, where Pegatron operates manufacturing bases, has not alleviated the uncertainty, as importers remain wary of policy reversals. Tung stated that the on-again, off-again nature of these levies paralyzes decision-making, with retailers avoiding

iPhone 15 Plus
iPhone 15 Plus
A16
26h

increased shipments during the pause due to fears of sudden tariff reinstatement.

Pegatron, which assembles MacBooks, iPads, and Apple Watches, exports $2 billion worth of iPhones from India to the U.S. in March 2025, alongside Foxconn's $1.3 billion contribution.

The company's decision to maintain current production plans, rather than adjust for short-term tariff changes, reflects the long-term planning required for manufacturing bases, as Tung emphasized to Reuters. This cautious stance could lead to reduced stock availability if demand outpaces supply.

PEGATRON'S ROLE IN APPLE'S SUPPLY CHAIN

Pegatron ranks as Apple's second-largest assembler after Foxconn, producing MacBooks, iPads, Apple Watches, and contributing to iPhone assembly. Operating factories in Taiwan, Vietnam, Indonesia, and India,

Pegatron employs thousands and supports Apple's global supply chain, which faced a $700 billion market value loss in 2025 due to tariff-related uncertainty. The company's Hosur, India, facility, part of Tata Electronics' network, produces older iPhone models, while Foxconn's Karnataka plant prepares to ship iPhone 16 series units by May.

Tung's warning that U.S. shelves could resemble those in developing nations, where consumers find empty displays, stems from Pegatron's observation that retailers are not increasing imports during the tariff pause.

The company's refusal to alter long-term plans, as Tung told Reuters, prioritizes stability over reactive shifts, potentially limiting stock replenishment for Apple products in the U.S. market.

RETAILERS STOCKPILE AMID SHORTAGE FEARS

U.S. retailers like Best Buy and Walmart have begun stockpiling inventory to mitigate potential shortages, a response to the tariff-induced supply chain chaos, according to industry reports.

This stockpiling mirrors strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic, when retailers hoarded goods to counter disruptions. However, Pegatron's Tung noted that importers are reluctant to ramp up shipments, as the 10% tariff's future remains uncertain, with some hoping for a repeal.

The hesitation stems from the risk of overstocking if tariffs are lifted, leaving retailers with excess inventory purchased at higher costs. This wait-and-see approach, as Tung described, could result in bare shelves within two months, particularly for electronics like iPhones, which rely on Pegatron and Foxconn's production in tariff-affected regions. The impact could extend to back-to-school and holiday shopping seasons, with reduced availability of consumer tech products.

APPLE'S TEMPORARY TARIFF EXEMPTION

Apple secured a temporary exemption for iPhones, Macs, Apple Watches, and iPads, similar to a 2019 tariff relief for Mac Pro parts negotiated by CEO Tim Cook. Despite this,

Phone
Mac
Apple Battersea
Apple Battersea

the broader 10% levy on U.S. imports and the potential reinstatement of higher tariffs continue to disrupt planning, as Pegatron's warning indicates.

The exemption covers Pegatron's output from non-Chinese facilities, but the uncertainty surrounding future policy changes has led to a $700 billion drop in Apple's market value, reflecting investor concerns about supply chain stability.

Tung's statement to Reuters suggests that even with Apple's exemption, the supply chain's wait-and-see mentality could reduce product availability. Pegatron's role in producing $2 billion in iPhone exports from India in March 2025 underscores its significance, but the company's decision not to adjust production plans may limit stock replenishment, affecting U.S. retailers and consumers.

INDIA'S GROWING ROLE IN APPLE PRODUCTION

Pegatron's operations in India, alongside Foxconn and Tata Electronics, have made the country a critical manufacturing hub for Apple, producing 20% of global iPhone output, up from 14% last year. The Hosur, Tamil Nadu, facility, part of Tata's network, assembles older iPhone models, while Foxconn's Karnataka plant is gearing up to produce iPhone 16 series units by May. India's zero-tariff advantage on smartphone exports to the U.S., compared to China's 125% duty, supports Apple's shift, with $22 billion in iPhones assembled in India last fiscal year.

Despite a September 2024 fire at Tata's Hosur component plant, which disrupted back panel production, Apple mitigated shortages using an eight-week stock buffer.

Pegatron's warning about empty shelves reflects concerns that tariff uncertainty could overwhelm India's growing capacity, as retailers hesitate to import during the tariff pause, potentially leading to stockouts in the U.S.

TOYOTA AND WAYMO COLLABORATE ON AUTONOMOUS DRIVING TECHNOLOGY

TOYOTA
moving forward

Toyota Motor Corporation has signed a preliminary agreement with Waymo, a U.S. leader in autonomous driving technology, to explore joint development of self-driving car systems, as announced this week. The partnership focuses on creating a new autonomous vehicle platform and advancing technology for personally owned vehicles, positioning Japan's largest automaker to strengthen its presence in the self-driving sector. For automakers, technology developers, and potential users, this collaboration highlights Toyota's strategy to integrate advanced autonomous capabilities, leveraging Waymo's expertise to enhance mobility and safety.

The deal involves Toyota's automotive-technology division, Woven, and aims to incorporate Waymo's fully autonomous driving system, the Waymo Driver, into Toyota's vehicles.

Waymo, a subsidiary of Alphabet, has operated driverless ride-hailing services in cities like San Francisco and Phoenix since 2017, logging over 20 million autonomous miles. Toyota, with global sales of 10.3 million vehicles in 2024, seeks to align with its safety and accessibility goals, as stated by Executive Vice President Hiroki Nakajima.

No specific timeline or financial terms were disclosed, with the agreement centered on exploratory product development.

AGREEMENT SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

Toyota and Waymo are collaborating to develop an autonomous vehicle platform, potentially integrating the Waymo Driver into Toyota's models for ride-hailing and personal use. Woven, Toyota's software and technology arm, will work to adapt Waymo's autonomous system to Toyota's platforms.

WAYMO

Nakajima emphasized the goal of achieving zero traffic accidents and universal mobility, while Waymo's co-CEO Tekedra Mawakana highlighted shared ambitions for safer roads.

The partnership remains in early stages, with no details on funding or product launch schedules. The focus is on assessing how Toyota's manufacturing capabilities can combine with Waymo's self-driving technology to create reliable autonomous vehicles.

WAYMO'S DRIVING SYSTEM AND EXPERIENCE

Waymo's Waymo Driver, a fifth-generation autonomous system, powers driverless ride-hailing services in San Francisco, Phoenix, Los Angeles, and Austin, handling over 150,000 weekly trips.

The system has completed 20 million autonomous miles on public roads and 20 billion in simulations, achieving a safety record with 100% fewer bodily injury claims and 76% fewer property damage claims than human-driven vehicles, per Swiss Re data.

It operates in Jaguar I-Pace electric vehicles, accommodating up to four passengers.

Waymo's technology has been tested in scenarios involving pedestrians and erratic drivers, using hazard analysis and crash avoidance protocols. This experience, built since the project's start in 2009, provides Toyota with access to a proven autonomous driving framework.

TOYOTA'S MANUFACTURING AND SAFETY EFFORTS

Toyota, with 10.3 million vehicles sold globally in 2024, has advanced driver-assistance systems but trails in fully autonomous technology compared to Waymo.

The partnership builds on Toyota's prior collaborations, such as a 2018 deal with Uber, and reflects its push to integrate self-driving systems, as noted by Nakajima. Woven focuses on developing software to support autonomous driving, facilitating the integration of Waymo's technology into Toyota's vehicles.

Toyota's manufacturing scale, producing models like the Camry and Prius, complements Waymo's software expertise. The collaboration aims to enhance safety, addressing the 1.35 million annual global roadway deaths, 94% of which involve human error in the U.S., according to Waymo's safety data.

APPLICATIONS FOR RIDE-HAILING AND PERSONAL VEHICLES

The agreement explores incorporating Waymo's autonomous technology into personally owned Toyota vehicles, differing from Waymo's robotaxi model. This could enable features like subscription-based self-driving modes for owners, allowing activation of autonomous capabilities. The partnership also considers supplying Toyota vehicles for Waymo's ride-hailing services, expanding operations in cities like Atlanta, where Waymo partners with Uber.

No specific vehicle models or timelines were announced, but the collaboration could develop a new platform optimized for autonomy, merging

WAYMO

TOYO

Toyota's hardware with Waymo's Waymo Driver to serve both consumer and commercial markets.

COMPETITIVE AND REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

Toyota faces competition from Tesla, which advances its Full Self-Driving system, and Chinese firms deploying autonomous vehicles in test cities.

Waymo's safety record contrasts with incidents like General Motors' Cruise, which faced a California license suspension in 2023 after a pedestrian collision.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's 2024 probe into Waymo, citing 17 crashes with stationary objects, notes no injuries but underscores regulatory challenges.

TATA PLANT STARTS IPHONE PRODUCTION AS APPLE SHIFTS FROM CHINA

Tata Electronics has launched iPhone production at a new facility in Hosur, Tamil Nadu, marking a significant step in Apple's strategy to diversify manufacturing away from China, where U.S. tariffs have disrupted operations. Announced this week, the plant began assembling older iPhone models on a single production line, with another Foxconn facility in Karnataka set to start shipping newer models, like the iPhone 16 series, by May. For Indian consumers, global markets, and tech industry observers, this development highlights India's growing role as a key manufacturing hub, contributing 20% of Apple's global iPhone output, up from 14% last year.

Apple's pivot follows U.S. President Donald Trump's tariffs, which impose a 125% duty on Chinese goods, compared to a paused 26% rate on Indian imports. The Hosur plant, part of Tata's expanding operations, joins two other Indian factories—one acquired from Wistron in Bengaluru and another from Pegatron in Chennai—employing 20,000 workers and exporting $2 billion worth of iPhones to the U.S. in March alone. A September 2024 fire at Tata's Hosur component plant briefly halted production, but Apple mitigated impacts with an eight-week stock buffer, avoiding immediate shortages.

India's manufacturing surge, supported by government incentives, contrasts with China's tariff-driven challenges, positioning Tata and Foxconn to produce over 60 million iPhones annually by 2026. As Apple navigates supply chain shifts, the Hosur plant's output strengthens India's electronics ecosystem,

TATA ELECTRONICS

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iPhone 16 Pro และ iPhone 16 Pro Max
TV
Mail

aligning with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Make in India" initiative.

NEW HOSUR PLANT BEGINS OPERATIONS

Tata Electronics' new facility in Hosur, Tamil Nadu, started producing older iPhone models this week, using one assembly line to manufacture devices like the iPhone 14 and 15. The plant, part of a complex that employed 20,000 workers before a September 2024 fire disrupted component production, is now operational, with plans to expand output. The fire, which halted back panel production, forced Apple to rely on an eight-week stockpile, avoiding immediate impacts on festive season sales of 1.5 million units in India, as estimated by Counterpoint Research.

The Hosur plant's launch follows Tata's acquisition of a Pegatron facility in Chennai, where it holds a 60% stake, and a Wistron plant in Bengaluru, boosting its capacity to produce 5 million iPhones annually. Apple's suppliers, including Foxconn, have adapted to tariff pressures, with Foxconn's Chennai plant running Sunday shifts to produce 20 million iPhones last year, including iPhone 15 and 16 models. Tata's role as a key contractor underscores India's emergence as a manufacturing base for Apple's global supply chain.

APPLE'S TARIFF-DRIVEN SHIFT FROM CHINA

U.S. tariffs on Chinese goods, reaching 125% under Trump's administration, have prompted Apple to accelerate production in India, where a 26% import duty was paused for 90 days, excluding China. Apple shipped 600 tons of iPhones worth $2 billion from India to the U.S. in March, a record for Tata and Foxconn, with the latter contributing $1.3 billion, according to customs data. This shift aims to produce most U.S.-sold iPhones in India by 2026, reducing reliance on China, which accounts for 75% of global iPhone production compared to India's 18%.

The September 2024 fire at Tata's Hosur component plant, which supplies back panels for Foxconn and Tata's iPhone assembly, raised concerns about production delays, with Counterpoint estimating a 15% shortfall in festive season demand. Apple's eight-week stock buffer mitigated immediate disruptions, but prolonged halts could necessitate additional assembly lines in China, highlighting the challenges of diversifying supply chains amid trade disputes.

INDIA'S MANUFACTURING ECOSYSTEM EXPANDS

India's role in Apple's supply chain has grown, with the country assembling $22 billion worth of iPhones in the fiscal year ending March 2025, a 60% increase from the prior year. Tata and Foxconn operate three factories, with two more under construction, including Foxconn's $2.6 billion Karnataka plant set to begin trial production of iPhone 16 models in May. The Hosur facility, employing up to 40,000 workers at full capacity, supports this expansion, alongside Tata's Bengaluru and Chennai plants.

CPAC
CPAC
CPAC

Government incentives, including the 2020 Production-Linked Incentive scheme, have bolstered India's electronics sector, reducing smartphone import reliance from China. Apple's operations in India generated $17.4 billion in iPhone exports last year, with the country's smartphone market share rising from 2% in 2018 to 6% in 2024. These factories, producing models from iPhone 14 to premium titanium Pro variants, position India as a critical export hub for the U.S. and Europe.

TATA'S STRATEGIC ROLE IN APPLE'S PLANS

Tata Electronics has emerged as a pivotal Apple supplier, operating three iPhone plants and acquiring stakes in former Wistron and Pegatron facilities. The Hosur plant's production of older models complements Tata's Chennai facility, which manufactures 5 million iPhones annually with 10,000 workers. The company's $250 million in iPhone exports to the U.S. and Netherlands in the year ending August 2024 reflects its growing global reach, despite the fire-related setback.

Tata's rapid expansion aligns with Apple's goal to produce over 60 million iPhones annually in India by 2026, doubling current output. The company's 32-step quality checks and 12-month warranties on refurbished devices enhance its reliability, supporting Apple's shift from China. Tata's role strengthens India's industrial ecosystem, fostering supplier networks and skilled labor pools in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

xconn

CONSUMER AND MARKET IMPACT

The secondhand smartphone market, growing faster than new device sales, benefits from India's increased iPhone production, as older models like the iPhone 14 enter resale channels. Refurbished iPhones, offering 15 to 50% savings, hold a 60% global market share, with platforms like Gazelle and Backmarket providing warranties. India's festive season, from late October to early November, sees 1.5 million iPhone 14 and 15 units sold locally, though the 2024 fire risked a 15% shortfall, mitigated by stock reserves.

Apple's tariff-driven shift could raise U.S. iPhone prices, with UBS estimating a 29% increase for the iPhone Pro Max from $1,200 to $1,550 if costs are passed on. India's zero-tariff advantage on smartphone exports to the U.S., compared to China's 125% duty, supports Apple's strategy to maintain price stability. The Hosur plant's output, alongside Foxconn's Karnataka facility, ensures supply continuity, meeting demand in key markets while reinforcing India's manufacturing prominence.

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SPECIAL EDITION" Spirits were high at Apple's "There's more in the making" event, which was held at the Howard Gilman Opera House in Brooklyn, New York on October 30. Hot off the heels of the launch of the new iPhone XS, XS Max and XR, Tim Cook and Co were ready to show off next-generation models of two of the company's most beloved products: the Mac, and the iPad. Introducing a whole host of new editions, this was an Apple event to

Everything Apple, Every Week.

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CONTACTS

General Inquiries	contact@applemagazine.com
App Support	support@applemagazine.com
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Content Editor	editor@applemagazine.com

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